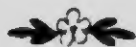




George Borrow

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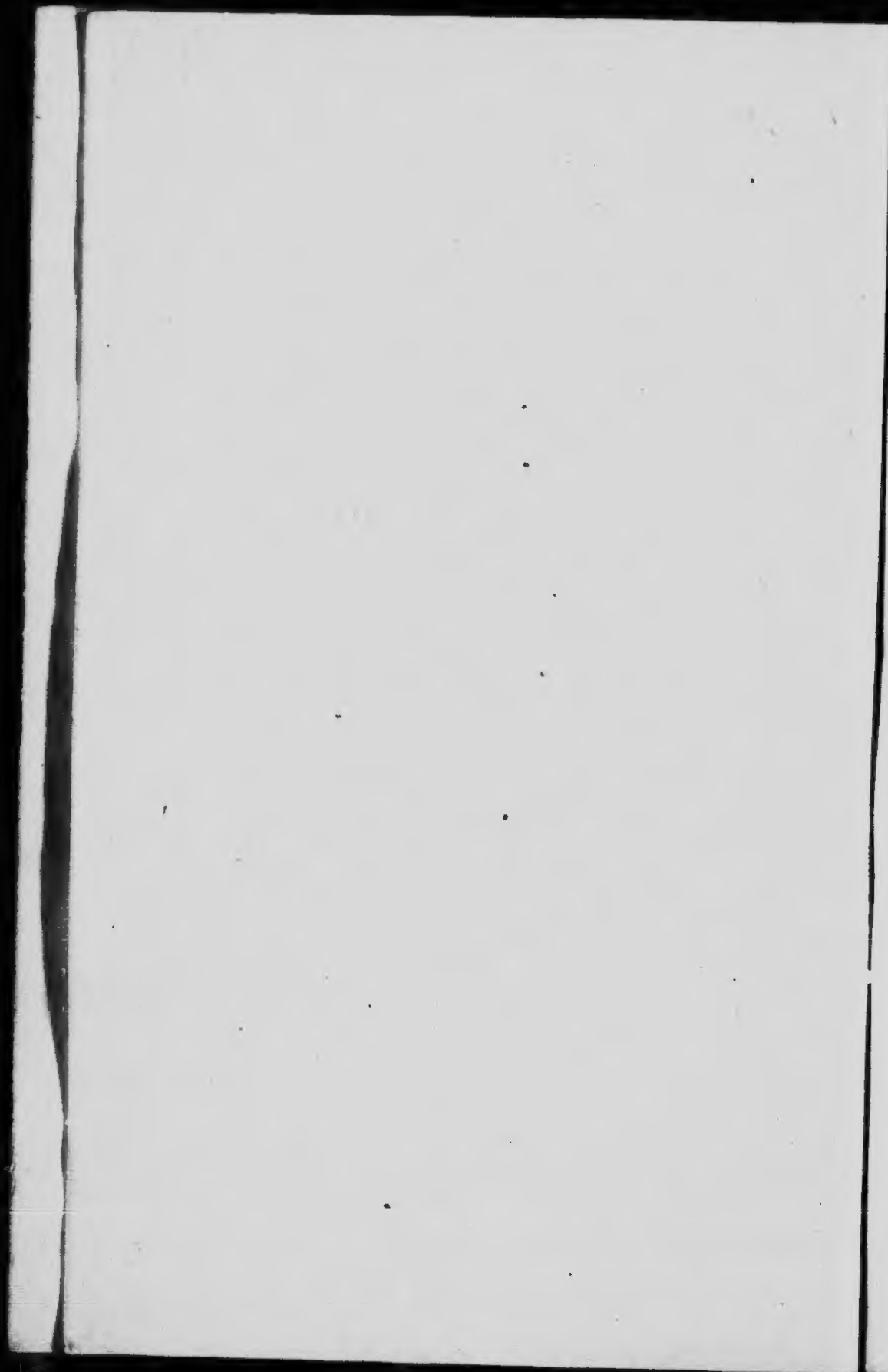
The  
LIFE OF  
GEORGE BORROW



Clement K. Shorter



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TO  
AUGUSTINE BIRRELL  
A FRIEND OF LONG YEARS AND A TRUE  
LOVER OF GEORGE BORROW  
C. K. S.



## INTRODUCTION

THERE is a substantial biography of George Borrow in two large volumes by the late Dr. Knapp, an American professor who gave many years of devotion to the subject. But I have had the singular advantage over Dr. Knapp in that all the private letters and personal papers left by Borrow to his step-daughter and heir, Henrietta MacOubrey, have come into my hands. These include Borrow's letters to his wife and step-daughter, many of which will be found scattered through this biography. This book was first published under the title of *George Borrow and his Circle*, but I am grateful to a publisher for sending it forth once more in a form which makes it available to a larger public. Certain new letters from Borrow to his wife which have been found since the first appearance of this book have been added, together with other hitherto unprinted documents, making this issue of *The Life of George Borrow* of much more value than its predecessor.

CLEMENT K. SHORTER.

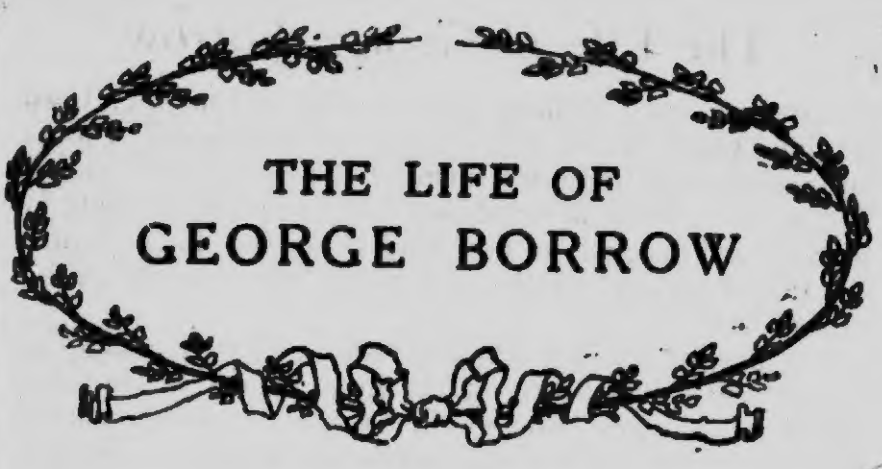
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# THE LIFE OF GEORGE BORROW

## CHAPTER I

### CAPTAIN BORROW OF THE WEST NORFOLK MILITIA

GEORGE HENRY BORROW was born at Dumpling Green near East Dereham, Norfolk, on the 5th of July, 1803. It pleased him to state on many an occasion that he was born at East Dereham.

On an evening of July, in the year 18—, at East D—, a beautiful little town in a certain district of East Anglia, I first saw the light,

he writes in the opening lines of *Lavengro*, using almost the identical phraseology that we find in the opening lines of Goethe's *Wahrheit und Dichtung*. Here is a later memory of Dereham from *Lavengro*:

What it is at present I know not, for thirty years and more have elapsed since I last trod its streets. It will scarcely have improved, for how could it be better than it was? I love to think on thee, pretty, quiet D—, thou pattern of an English country town, with thy clean but narrow streets branching out from thy modest market-place, with their old-fashioned houses, with here and there a roof of venerable thatch, with thy one half-aristocratic mansion, where resided the Lady Bountiful—she, the generous and kind, who loved to visit the sick, leaning on her golden-headed cane, while the sleek old footman walked at a respectful distance behind. Pretty, quiet D—, with thy venerable church, in which moulder the mortal remains of England's sweetest and most pious bard.

Then follows an exquisite eulogy of the poet Cowper, which readers of *Lavengro* know full well. Three years before

## The Life of George Borrow

Borrow was born William Cowper died in this very town, leaving behind him so rich a legacy of poetry and of prose, and moreover so fragrant a memory of a life in which humour and pathos played an equal part. It was no small thing for a youth who aspired to any kind of renown to be born in the neighbourhood of the last resting-place of the author of *The Task*.

Yet Borrow was not actually born at East Dereham, but a mile and a half away, at the little hamlet of Dumpling Green, in what was then a glorious wilderness of common and furze bush, but is now a quiet landscape of fields and hedges. You will find the home in which the author of *Lavengro* first saw the light without much difficulty. It is a fair-sized farmhouse, with a long low frontage separated from the road by a considerable strip of garden. It suggests a prosperous yeoman class, and I have known farm-houses in East Anglia not one whit larger dignified by the name of "hall." Nearly opposite is a pond. The trim hedges are a delight to us to-day, but you must cast your mind back to a century ago when they were entirely absent. The house belonged to George Borrow's maternal grandfather, Samuel Perfrement, who farmed the adjacent land at this time. Samuel and Mary Perfrement had eight children, the third of whom, Ann, was born in 1772.

In February, 1793, Ann Perfrement, aged twenty-one, married Thomas Borrow, aged thirty-five, in the Parish Church of East Dereham, and of the two children that were born to them George Henry Borrow was the younger. Thomas Borrow was the son of one John Borrow of St. Cleer in Cornwall, who died before this child was born, and is described by his grandson as the scion "of an ancient but reduced Cornish family, tracing descent from the de Burghs, and entitled to carry their arms."

When Thomas Borrow was born the family were nothing more than small farmers, and Thomas Borrow and his brothers were working on the land in the intervals of attending the parish school. At the age of eighteen Thomas was apprenticed to a maltster at Liskeard, and about this time he joined the local Militia. Tradition has it that his career as a maltster was cut short by his knocking his master down in a scrimmage. The victor fled from the scene of his prowess, and enlisted as a private soldier in the Coldstream Guards,

## Captain Borrow

This was in 1783, and in 1793 he was transferred to the West Norfolk Militia; hence his appearance at East Dereham, where, now a serjeant, his occupations for many a year were recruiting and drilling. It is recorded that at a theatrical performance at East Dereham he first saw, presumably on the stage of the county-hall, his future wife—Ann Perfrement. She was, it seems, engaged in a minor part in a travelling company, not, we may assume, altogether with the sanction of her father, who, in spite of his inheritance of French blood, doubtless shared the then very strong English prejudice against the stage. However, Ann was one of eight children, and had, as we shall find in after years, no inconsiderable strength of character, and so may well at twenty years of age have decided upon a career for herself. In any case we need not press too hard the Cornish and French origin of George Borrow to explain his wandering tendencies, nor need we wonder at the suggestion of Nathaniel Hawthorne, that he was "supposed to be of gypsy descent by the mother's side." You have only to think of the father, whose work carried him from time to time to every corner of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of the mother with her reminiscence of life in a travelling theatrical company, to explain in no small measure the glorious vagabondage of George Borrow.

Behold then Thomas Borrow and Ann Perfrement as man and wife, he being thirty-five years of age, she twenty-one. A roving, restless life was in front of the pair for many a day, the West Norfolk Militia being stationed in some eight or nine separate towns within the interval of ten years between Thomas Borrow's marriage and his second son's birth. The first child, John Thomas Borrow, was born on the 15th April, 1801. The second son, George Henry Borrow, the subject of this memoir, was born in his grandfather's house at Dumpling Green, East Dereham, his mother having found a natural refuge with her father while her husband was busily recruiting in Norfolk. The two children passed with their parents from place to place, and in 1809 we find them once again in East Dereham. From his son's two books, *Lavengro* and *Wild Wales*, we can trace the father's later wanderings until his final retirement to Norwich on a pension. In 1810 the family were at Norman Cross in Huntingdonshire, when Captain Borrow had to assist in

## The Life of George Borrow

guarding the French prisoners of war; for it was the stirring epoch of the Napoleonic conflict, and within the temporary prison "six thousand French and other foreigners, followers of the Grand Corsican, were now immured."

What a strange appearance had those mighty casernes, with their blank blind walls, without windows, or grating, and their slanting roofs, out of which, through orifices where the tiles had been removed, would be protruded dozens of grim heads, feasting their prison-sick eyes on the wide expanse of country unfolded from that airy height. Ah! there was much misery in those casernes; and from those roofs, doubtless, many a wistful look was turned in the direction of lovely France. Much had the poor inmates to endure, and much to complain of, to the disgrace of England be it said—of England, in general so kind and bountiful. Rations of carrion meat, and bread from which I have seen the very hounds occasionally turn away, were unworthy entertainment even for the most ruffian enemy, when helpless and a captive; and such, alas! was the fare in those casernes.

But here we have only to do with Thomas Borrow, of whom we get many a quaint glimpse in *Lavengro*, our first and our last being concerned with him in the one quality that his son seems to have inherited, as the associate of a prize-fighter—Big Ben Brain. Borrow records in his opening chapter that Ben Brain and his father met in Hyde Park probably in 1790, and that after an hour's conflict "the champions shook hands and retired, each having experienced quite enough of the other's prowess." Borrow further relates that four months afterwards Brain "died in the arms of my father, who read to him the Bible in his last moments." More than once in his after years the old soldier seems to have had a shy pride in that early conflict, although the piety which seems to have come to him with the responsibilities of wife and children led him to count any recalling of the episode as a "temptation." When Borrow was about thirteen years of age, he overheard his father and mother discussing their two boys, the elder being the father's favourite and George the mother's:

"I will hear nothing against my first-born," said my father, "even in the way of insinuation: he is my joy and pride; the very image of myself in my youthful days, long before I fought Big Ben, though perhaps not quite so tall or strong built. As for the other, God bless the child! I love him, I'm sure; but I must be blind not to see the difference between him and his brother. Why, he has neither my hair nor my eyes; and then

## Captain Borrow

his countenance! why, 'tis absolutely swarthy, God forgive me! I had almost said like that of a gypsy, but I have nothing to say against that; the boy is not to be blamed for the colour of his face, nor for his hair and eyes; but, then, his ways and manners!—I confess I do not like them, and that they give me no little uneasiness.”<sup>1</sup>

Borrow throughout his narrative refers to his father as “a man of excellent common sense,” and he quotes the opinion of William Taylor, who had rather a bad reputation as a “freethinker” with all the church-going citizens of Norwich, with no little pride. Borrow is of course the “young man” of the dialogue. He was then eighteen years of age:

“Not so, not so,” said the young man eagerly; “before I knew you I knew nothing, and am still very ignorant; but of late my father’s health has been very much broken, and he requires attention; his spirits also have become low, which, to tell you the truth, he attributes to my misconduct. He says that I have imbibed all kinds of strange notions and doctrines, which will, in all probability, prove my ruin, both here and hereafter; which—which——”

“Ah! I understand,” said the elder, with another calm whiff. “I have always had a kind of respect for your father, for there is something remarkable in his appearance, something heroic, and I would fain have cultivated his acquaintance; the feeling, however, has not been reciprocated. I met him the other day, up the road, with his cane and dog, and saluted him; he did not return my salutation.”

“He has certain opinions of his own,” said the youth, “which are widely different from those which he has heard that you profess.”

“I respect a man for entertaining an opinion of his own,” said the elderly individual. “I hold certain opinions; but I should not respect an individual the more for adopting them. All I wish for is tolerance, which I myself endeavour to practise. I have always loved the truth, and sought it; if I have not found it, the greater my misfortune.”<sup>2</sup>

When Borrow is twenty years of age we have another glimpse of father and son, the father in his last illness, the son eager as usual to draw out his parent upon the one subject that appeals to his adventurous spirit, “I should like to know something about Big Ben,” he says:

“You are a strange lad,” said my father; “and though of late I have begun to entertain a more favourable opinion than heretofore, there is still much about you that I do not understand.”

<sup>1</sup> *Lavengro*, ch. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. xxiii.

## The Life of George Borrow

Why do you bring up that name? Don't you know that it is one of my temptations? You wish to know something about him? Well, I will oblige you this once, and then farewell to such vanities—something about him. I will tell you—his—skin when he flung off his clothes—and he had a particular knack in doing so—his skin, when he bared his mighty chest and back for combat; and when he fought he stood, so—if I remember right—his skin, I say, was brown and dusky as that of a toad. Oh me! I wish my elder son was here!"

Concerning the career of Borrow's father there seem to be no documents other than one contained in *Lavengro*, yet no *Life of Borrow* can possibly be complete that does not draw boldly upon the son's priceless tributes. And so we come now to the last scene in the career of the elder Borrow—his death-bed—which is also the last page of the first volume of *Lavengro*. George Borrow's brother has arrived from abroad. The little house in Willow Lane, Norwich, contained the mother and her two sons sorrowfully awaiting the end, which came on 28th February, 1824.

At the dead hour of night—it might be about two—I was awakened from sleep by a cry which sounded from the room immediately below that in which I slept. I knew the cry—it was the cry of my mother; and I also knew its import, yet I made no effort to rise, for I was for the moment paralysed. Again the cry sounded, yet still I lay motionless—the stupidity of horror was upon me. A third time, and it was then that, by a violent effort, bursting the spell which appeared to bind me, I sprang from the bed and rushed downstairs. My mother was running wildly about the room; she had awoke and found my father senseless in the bed by her side. I essayed to raise him, and after a few efforts supported him in the bed in a sitting posture. My brother now rushed in, and, snatching up a light that was burning, he held it to my father's face. "The surgeon! the surgeon!" he cried; then, dropping the light, he ran out of the room, followed by my mother; I remained alone, supporting the senseless form of my father; the light had been extinguished by the fall, and an almost total darkness reigned in the room. The form pressed heavily against my bosom; at last methought it moved. Yes, I was right; there was a heaving of the breast, and then a gasping. Were those words which I heard? Yes, they were words, low and indistinct at first, and then audible. The mind of the dying man was reverting to former scenes. I heard him mention names which I had often heard him mention before. It was an awful moment; I felt stupefied, but I still contrived to support my dying father. There was a pause; again my father spoke: I heard him speak of Minden, and of Meredith, the old Minden serjeant, and then he uttered another name, which at one period

## Captain Borrow

of his life was much on his lips, the name of——; but this is a solemn moment! There was a deep gasp: I shook, and thought all was over; but I was mistaken—my father moved, and revived for a moment; he supported himself in bed without my assistance. I make no doubt that for a moment he was perfectly sensible, and it was then that, clasping his hands, he uttered another name clearly, distinctly—it was the name of Christ. With that name upon his lips the brave old soldier sank back upon my bosom, and, with his hands still clasped, yielded up his soul.

Did Borrow's father ever really fight Big Ben Brain or Bryan in Hyde Park, or is it all a fantasy of the artist's imagining? We shall never know. Borrow called his *Lavengro* "An Autobiography" at one stage of its inception, although he wished to repudiate the autobiographical nature of his story at another. Dr. Knapp in his anxiety to prove that Borrow wrote his own memoirs in *Lavengro* and *Romany Rye* tells us that he had no creative faculty—an absurd proposition. But I think we may accept the contest between Ben Brain and Thomas Borrow, and what a revelation of heredity that impressive death-bed scene may be counted. Borrow on one occasion in later life declared that his favourite books were the Bible and the Newgate Calendar. We know that he specialised on the Bible and Prize-Fighting in no ordinary fashion—and here we see his father on his death-bed struggling between the religious sentiments of his maturity and the one great worldly escapade of his early manhood.

## CHAPTER II

### BORROW'S MOTHER

THROUGHOUT his whole life George Borrow adored his mother, who seems to have developed into a woman of great strength of character far remote from the pretty play-actor who won the heart of a young soldier at East Dereham in the last years of the eighteenth century. We would gladly know something of the early years of Ann Perfrement. Her father was a farmer, whose farm at Dumpling Green we have already described. He did not, however, "farm his own little estate" as Borrow declared. The grandfather—a French Protestant—came, if we are to believe Borrow, from Caen in Normandy after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, but there is no documentary evidence to support the contention. However, the story of the Huguenot immigration into England is clearly bound up with Norwich and the adjacent district. And so we may well take the name of "Perfrement" as conclusive evidence of a French origin, and reject as utterly untenable the not unnatural suggestion of Nathaniel Hawthorne, that Borrow's mother was "of gypsy descent." She was one of the eight children of Samuel and Mary Perfrement, all of whom seem to have devoted their lives to East Anglia. We owe to Dr. Knapp's edition of *Lavengro* one exquisite glimpse of Ann's girlhood that is not in any other issue of the book. Ann's elder sister, curious to know if she was ever to be married, falls in with the current superstition that she must wash her linen and "watch" it drying before the fire between eleven and twelve at night. Ann Perfrement was ten years old at the time. The two girls walked over to East Dereham, purchased the necessary garment, washed it in the pool near the house that may still be seen, and watched and watched. Suddenly when the clock struck twelve they heard, or thought they heard, a footstep on the path, the wind howled, and the elder sister sprang to the door, locked and bolted it, and then fell in convulsions on the floor. The superstition, which Borrow

## Borrow's Mother

seems to have told his mother had a Danish origin, is common enough in Ireland and in Celtic lands. It could scarcely have been thus rehearsed by two Norfolk children had they not had the blood of a more imaginative race in their veins. In addition to this we find more than one effective glimpse of Borrow's mother in *Lavengro*. We have already noted the episode in which she takes the side of her younger boy against her husband, with whom John was the favourite. We meet her again when after his father's death George had shouldered his knapsack and made his way to London to seek his fortune by literature. His elder brother had remained at home, determined upon being a painter, but joined George in London, leaving the widowed mother momentarily alone in Norwich.

"And how are things going on at home?" said I to my brother, after we had kissed and embraced. "How is my mother, and how is the dog?"

"My mother, thank God, is tolerably well," said my brother, "but very much given to fits of crying. As for the dog, he is not so well; but we will talk more of these matters anon," said my brother, again glancing at the breakfast things. "I am very hungry, as you may suppose, after having travelled all night."

Thereupon I exerted myself to the best of my ability to perform the duties of hospitality, and I made my brother welcome—I may say more than welcome; and when the rage of my brother's hunger was somewhat abated, we recommenced talking about the matters of our little family, and my brother told me much about my mother; he spoke of her fits of crying, but said that of late the said fits of crying had much diminished, and she appeared to be taking comfort; and, if I am not much mistaken, my brother told me that my mother had of late the prayer-book frequently in her hand, and yet oftener the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

Ann Borrow lived in Willow Lane, Norwich, for thirty-three years. That Borrow was a devoted husband these pages will show. He was also a devoted son. When he had made a prosperous marriage he tried hard to persuade his mother to live with him at Oulton, but all in vain. She had the wisdom to see that such an arrangement is rarely conducive to a son's domestic happiness. She continued to live in the little cottage made sacred by many associations until almost the end of her days. Here she had lived in earlier years with her husband and her two ambitious boys, and in Norwich, doubtless, she had made her own friendships,

<sup>1</sup> *Lavengro*, ch. xxxvii.

## The Life of George Borrow

although of these no record remains. The cottage still stands in its modest court, and now serves the worthy purpose of a museum for Borrow relics. In Borrow's day it was the property of Thomas King, a carpenter. You enter from Willow Lane through a covered passage into what was then known as King's Court. Here the little house faces you, and you meet it with a peculiarly agreeable sensation, recalling more than one incident in *Levensgro* that transpired there. Thomas King, the carpenter, was in direct descent in the maternal line from the family of Parker, which gave to Norwich one of its most distinguished sons in the famous Archbishop of Queen Elizabeth's day. He extended his business as carpenter sufficiently to die a prosperous builder. Of his two sons one, also named Thomas, became physician to Prince Talleyrand, and married a sister of John Stuart Mill. All this by the way, but there is little more to record of Borrow's mother apart from the letters addressed to her by her son, which occur in their due place in these records. Yet one little memorandum among my papers which bears Mrs. Borrow's signature may well find place here:

In the year 797 I was at Canterbury. One night at about one o'clock Sir Robert Laurie and Captain Treve came to our lodgings and tapped at our bedroom door, and told my husband to get up, and get the men under arms without beat of drum as soon as possible, for that there was a mutiny at the Nore. My husband did so, and in less than two hours they had marched out of town towards Sheerness without making any noise. They had to break open the store-house in order to get provender, because the Quartermaster, Serjeant Rowe, was out of the way. The Dragoon Guards at that time at Canterbury were in a state of mutiny.

ANN BORROW.

## CHAPTER III

### JOHN THOMAS BORROW

JOHN THOMAS BORROW was born two years before his younger brother, that is, on the 15th of April, 1801. His father, then Serjeant Borrow, was wandering from town to town, and it is not known where his elder son first saw the light. John Borrow's nature was cast in a somewhat different mould from that of his brother. He was his father's pride. Serjeant Borrow could not understand George with his extraordinary taste for the society of queer people—the wild Irish and the ragged Romanies. John had far more of the normal in his being. Borrow gives us in *Lavengro* our earliest glimpse of his brother:

He was a beautiful child; one of those occasionally seen in England, and in England alone; a rosy, angelic face, blue eyes, and light chestnut hair; it was not exactly an Anglo-Saxon countenance, in which, by the by, there is generally a cast of loutishness and stupidity; it partook, to a certain extent, of the Celtic character, particularly in the fire and vivacity which illumined it; his face was the mirror of his mind; perhaps no disposition more amiable was ever found amongst the children of Adam, united, however, with no inconsiderable portion of high and dauntless spirit. So great was his beauty in infancy, that people, especially those of the poorer classes, would follow the nurse who carried him about in order to look at and bless his lovely face. At the age of three months an attempt was made to snatch him from his mother's arms in the streets of London, at the moment she was about to enter a coach; indeed, his appearance seemed to operate so powerfully upon every person who beheld him, that my parents were under continual apprehension of losing him; his beauty, however, was perhaps surpassed by the quickness of his parts. He mastered his letters in a few hours, and in a day or two could decipher the names of people on the doors of houses and over the shop-windows.

John received his early education at the Norwich Grammar School, while the younger brother was kept under the paternal wing. Father and mother, with their younger boy George, were always on the move, passing from county to county and from country to country, as Serjeant Borrow,

## The Life of George Borrow

soon to be Captain, attended to his duties of drilling and recruiting, now in England, now in Scotland, now in Ireland. We are given a fascinating glimpse of John Borrow in *Lavengro* by way of a conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Borrow over the education of their children. It was agreed that while the family were in Edinburgh the boys should be sent to the High School, and so at the historic school that Sir Walter Scott had attended a generation before the two boys were placed, John being removed from the Norwich Grammar School for the purpose. Among his many prejudices of after years Borrow's dislike of Scott was perhaps the most regrettable, otherwise he would have gloried in the fact that their childhood had had one remarkable point in common. Each boy took part in the feuds between the Old Town and the New Town. Exactly as Scott records his prowess at "the manning' of the Cowgate Port," and the combats maintained with great vigour, "with stones, and sticks, and fisticuffs," as set forth in the first volume of Lockhart, so we have not dissimilar feats set down in *Lavengro*. Side by side also with the story of "Green-Brecks," which stands out in Scott's narrative of his school combats, we have the more lurid account by Borrow of David Haggart. Literary biography is made more interesting by such episodes of likeness and of contrast.

We next find John Borrow in Ireland with his father, mother, and brother. George is still a child, but he is precocious enough to be learning the language, and thus laying the foundation of his interest in little-known tongues. John is now an ensign in his father's regiment. "Ah! he was a sweet being, that boy soldier, a plant of early promise, bidding fair to become in after time all that is great, good, and admirable." Ensign John tells his little brother how pleased he is to find himself, although not yet sixteen years old, "a person in authority with many Englishmen under me. Oh! these last six weeks have passed like hours in heaven." That was in 1816, and we do not meet John again until five years later, when we hear of him rushing into the water to save a drowning man, while twenty others were bathing who might have rendered assistance. Borrow records once again his father's satisfaction:

"My boy, my own boy, you are the very image of myself, the day I took off my coat in the park to fight Big Ben," said my

## John Thomas Borrow

father, on meeting his son, wet and dripping, immediately after his bold feat. And who cannot excuse the honest pride of the old man—the stout old man?

In the interval the war had ended, and Napoleon had departed for St. Helena. Peace had led to the pensioning of militia officers, or reducing to half-pay of the juniors. The elder Borrow had settled in Norwich. George was set to study at the Grammar School there, while his brother worked in Old Crome's studio, for here was a moment when Norwich had its interesting Renaissance, and John Borrow was bent on being an artist. He had worked with Crome once before—during the brief interval that Napoleon was at Elba—but now he set to in real earnest, and we have evidence of a score of pictures by him that were catalogued in the exhibitions of the Norwich Society of Artists between the years 1817 and 1824. They include one portrait of the artist's father, and two of his brother George. Old Crome died in 1821, and then John went to London to study under Haydon. Borrow declares that his brother had real taste for painting, and that "if circumstances had not eventually diverted his mind from the pursuit, he would have attained excellence, and left behind him some enduring monument of his powers." "He lacked, however," he tells us, "one thing, the want of which is but too often fatal to the sons of genius, and without which genius is little more than a splendid toy in the hands of the possessor—perseverance, dogged perseverance." It is when he is thus commenting on his brother's characteristics that Borrow gives his own fine if narrow eulogy of Old Crome. John Borrow seems to have continued his studies in London under Haydon for a year, and then to have gone to Paris to copy pictures at the Louvre. He mentions a particular copy that he made of a celebrated picture by one of the Italian masters, for which a Hungarian nobleman paid him well. His three years' absence was brought to an abrupt termination by news of his father's illness. He returned to Norwich in time to stand by that father's bedside when he died. The elder Borrow died, as we have seen, in February, 1824. The little home in King's Court was kept on for the mother, and as John was making money by his pictures it was understood that he should stay with her. On the 1st April, however, George

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started for London, carrying the manuscript of *Romantic Ballads from the Danish* to Sir Richard Phillips, the publisher. On the 29th of the same month he was joined by his brother John. John had come to London at his own expense, but in the interests of the Norwich Town Council. The council wanted a portrait of one of its mayors for St. Andrew's Hall—that Valhalla of Norwich municipal worthies which still strikes the stranger as well-nigh unique in the city life of England. The municipality would fain have encouraged a fellow-citizen, and John Borrow had been invited to paint the portrait. "Why," it was asked, "should the money go into a stranger's pocket and be spent in London?" John, however, felt diffident of his ability and declined, and this in spite of the fact that the £100 offered for the portrait must have been very tempting. "What a pity it was," he said, "that Crome was dead." "Crome," said the orator of the deputation that had called on John Borrow,

"Crome; yes, he was a clever man, a very clever man, in his way; he was good at painting landscapes and farm-houses, but he would not do in the present instance, were he alive. He had no conception of the heroic, sir. We want some person capable of representing our mayor standing under the Norman arch of the cathedral."

At the mention of the heroic John bethought himself of Haydon, and suggested his name; hence his visit to London, and his proposed interview with Haydon. The two brothers went together to call upon the "painter of the heroic" at his studio in Connaught Terrace, Hyde Park. There was some difficulty about their admission, and it turned out afterwards that Haydon thought they might be duns, as he was very hard up at the time. His eyes glistened at the mention of the £100. "I am not very fond of painting portraits," he said, "but a mayor is a mayor, and there is something grand in that idea of the Norman arch." And thus Mayor Hawkes came to be painted by Benjamin Haydon, and his portrait may be found, not without diligent search, among the many municipal worthies that figure on the walls of that most picturesque old Hall in Norwich. Here is Borrow's description of the painting:

The original mayor was a mighty, portly man, with a bull's head, black hair, body like that of a dray horse, and legs and

<sup>1</sup> *Lewngro*, ch. xxv.

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thighs corresponding; a man six foot high at the least. To his bull's head, black hair, and body the painter had done justice; there was one point, however, in which the portrait did not correspond with the original—the legs were disproportionably short, the painter having substituted his own legs for those of the mayor.

John Borrow described Robert Hawkes to his brother as a person of many qualifications:

—big and portly, with a voice like Boanerges; a religious man, the possessor of an immense pew; loyal, so much so that I once heard him say that he would at any time go three miles to hear any one sing *God save the King*; moreover, a giver of excellent dinners. Such is our present mayor, who, owing to his loyalty, his religion, and a little, perhaps, to his dinners, is a mighty favourite.

Haydon, who makes no mention of the Borrowes in his *Correspondence* or *Autobiography*, although there is one letter of George Borrow's to him in the former work, had been in jail for debt three years prior to the visit of the Borrowes. He was then at work on his greatest success in "the heroic"—*The Raising of Lazarus*, a canvas nineteen feet long by fifteen high. The debt was one to house decorators, for the artist had ever large ideas. The bailiff, he tells us,<sup>1</sup> was so agitated at the sight of the painting of Lazarus in the studio that he cried out, "Oh, my God! Sir, I won't arrest you. Give me your word to meet me at twelve at the attorney's, and I'll take it." In 1821 Haydon married, and a little later we find him again "without a single shilling in the world—with a large picture before me not half done." In April, 1822, he is arrested at the instance of his colourman, "with whom I had dealt for fifteen years," and in November of the same year he is arrested again at the instance of "a miserable apothecary." In April, 1823, we find him in the King's Bench Prison, from which he was released in July. *The Raising of Lazarus* meanwhile had gone to pay his upholsterer £300, and his *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* had been sold for £240, although it had brought him £3000 in receipts at exhibitions. Clearly heroic pictures did not pay, and Haydon here took up "the torment of portrait-painting" as he called it.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of B. R. Haydon*, by Tom Taylor, 1853, vol. ii. p. 21.

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"Can you wonder," he wrote in July, 1825, "that I nauseate portraits, except portraits of clever people. I feel quite convinced that every portrait-painter, if there be purgatory, will leap at once to heaven, without this previous purification."

Perhaps it was Mayor Hawkes who helped to inspire this feeling. Yet the hundred pounds that John Borrow was able to procure must have been a godsend, for shortly before this we find him writing in his diary of the desperation that caused him to sell his books. "Books that had cost me £20 I got only £3 for. But it was better than starvation." Indeed it was in April of this year that the very baker was "insolent," and so in May, 1824, as we learn from *Tom Taylor's Life*, he produced "a full-length portrait of Mr. Hawkes, a late Mayor of Norwich, painted for St. Andrew's Hall in that city." But I must leave Haydon's troubled career, which closes so far as the two brothers are concerned with a letter from George to Haydon written the following year from 26 Bryanston Street, Portman Square:

DEAR SIR,—I should feel extremely obliged if you would allow me to sit to you as soon as possible. I am going to the south of France in little better than a fortnight, and I would sooner lose a thousand pounds than not have the honour of appearing in the picture.—Yours sincerely,

GEORGE BORROW.<sup>1</sup>

As Borrow was at the time in a most impoverished condition, it is not easy to believe that he would have wished to be taken at his word. He certainly had not a thousand pounds to lose. But he did undoubtedly, as we shall see, take that journey on foot through the south of France, after the manner of an earlier vagabond of literature—Oliver Goldsmith. Haydon was to be far too much taken up with his own troubles during the coming months to think any more about the Borrowes when he had once completed the portrait of the mayor, which he had done by July of this year. Borrow's letter to him is, however, an obvious outcome of a remark dropped by the painter on the occasion of his one visit to his studio when the following conversation took place:

"I'll stick to the heroic," said the painter; "I now and then dabble in the comic, but what I do gives me no pleasure, the

<sup>1</sup> *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table Talk*, with a Memoir by his son, Frederic Wordsworth Haydon, vol. i. pp. 360-1.

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comic is so low; there is nothing like the heroic. I am engaged here on a heroic picture," said he, pointing to the canvas; "the subject is 'Pharaoh dismissing Moses from Egypt,' after the last plague—the death of the first-born,—it is not far advanced—that finished figure is Moses": they both looked at the canvas, and I, standing behind, took a modest peep. The picture, as the painter said, was not far advanced, the Pharaoh was merely in outline; my eye was, of course, attracted by the finished figure, or rather what the painter had called the finished figure; but, as I gazed upon it, it appeared to me that there was something defective—something unsatisfactory in the figure. I concluded, however, that the painter, notwithstanding what he had said, had omitted to give it the finishing touch. "I intend this to be my best picture," said the painter; "what I want now is a face for Pharaoh; I have long been meditating on a face for Pharaoh." Here, chancing to cast his eye upon my countenance, of whom he had scarcely taken any manner of notice, he remained with his mouth open for some time. "Who is this?" said he at last. "Oh, this is my brother, I forgot to introduce him——."

We wish that the acquaintance had extended further, but this was not to be. Borrow was soon to commence the wanderings which were to give him much unsatisfactory fame, and the pair never met again. Let us, however, return to John Borrow, who accompanied Haydon to Norwich, leaving his brother for some time longer to the tender mercies of Sir Richard Phillips. John, we judge, seems to have had plenty of shrewdness, and was not without a sense of his own limitations. A chance came to him of commercial success in a distant land, and he seized that chance. A Norwich friend, Allday Kerrison, had gone out to Mexico, and writing from Zacatecas in 1825 asked John to join him. John accepted. His salary in the service of the Real del Monte Company was to be £300 per annum. He sailed for Mexico in 1826, having obtained from his Colonel, Lord Orford, leave of absence for a year, it being understood that renewals of that leave of absence might be granted. He was entitled to half-pay as a Lieutenant of the West Norfolk Militia, and this he settled upon his mother during his absence. His career in Mexico was a failure. There are many of his letters to his mother and brother extant which tell of the difficulties of his situation. He was in three Mexican companies in succession, and was about to be sent to Columbia to take charge of a mine when he was stricken with a fever, and died at Guanajuato on 22nd November, 1833. He had far exceeded any leave that his Colonel could

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in fairness grant, and before his death his name had been taken off the army rolls.

I have said that there are letters of John Borrow's extant. These show a keen intelligence, great practicality, and common sense. George—in 1829—had asked his brother as to joining him in Mexico. "If the country is soon settled I shall say 'yes,'" John answers. With equal wisdom he says to his brother, "Do not enter the army; it is a bad spec." In this same year, 1829, John writes to ask whether his mother and brother are "still living in that windy house of old King's; it gives me the rheumatism to think of it." In 1830 he writes to his mother that he wishes his brother were making money. "Neither he nor I have any luck, he works hard and remains poor." In February of 1831 John writes to George suggesting that he should endeavour to procure a commission in the regiment, and in July of the same year to try the law again:

I am convinced that your want of success in life is more owing to your being unlike other people than to any other cause.

John, as we have seen, died in Mexico of fever. George was at St. Petersburg working for the Bible Society when his mother writes from Norwich to tell him the news. John had died on 22nd November, 1833. "You are now my only hope," she writes, "... do not grieve, my dear George. I trust we shall all meet in heaven. Put a crape on your hat for some time." Had George Borrow's brother lived it might have meant very much in his life. There might have been nephews and nieces to soften the asperity of his later years. Who can say? Meanwhile, *Lavengro* contains no happier pages than those concerned with this dearly loved brother.

## CHAPTER IV

### A WANDERING CHILDHOOD

WE do not need to inquire too deeply as to Borrow's possible gypsy origin in order to account for his vagabond propensities. The lives of his parents before his birth, and the story of his own boyhood, sufficiently account for the dominant tendency in Borrow. His father and mother were married in 1793. Almost every year they changed their domicile. In 1801 a son was born to them,—they still continued to change their domicile. Captain Borrow followed his regiment from place to place, and his family accompanied him on these journeys. Dover, Colchester, Sandgate, Canterbury, Chelmsford—these are some of the towns where the Borrowes sojourned. It was the merest accident—the Peace of Amiens, to be explicit—that led them back to East Dereham in 1803, so that the second son was born in his grandfather's house. George was only a month old when he was carried off to Colchester; in 1804 he was in the barracks of Kent, in 1805 of Sussex, in 1806 at Hastings, in 1807 at Canterbury, and so on. The whole of the first thirteen years of Borrow's life is filled up in this way, until in 1816 he and his parents found a home of some permanence in Norwich. In 1809–10 they were at East Dereham, in 1810–11 at Norman Cross, in 1812 wandering from Harwich to Sheffield, and in 1813 wandering from Sheffield to Edinburgh; in 1814 they were in Norwich, and in 1815–16 in Ireland. In this last year they returned to Norwich, the father to retire on full pay, and to live in Willow Lane until his death. How could a boy, whose first twelve years of life had been made up of such continual wandering, have been other than a restless, nomad-loving man, envious of the free life of the gypsies, for whom alone in later life he seemed to have kindness? Those twelve years are to most boys merely the making of a moral foundation for good or ill; to Borrow they were everything, and at least four personalities captured his imagination during that short span, as we see if we follow

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his juvenile wanderings more in detail to Dereham, Norman Cross, Edinburgh, and Clonmel, and the personalities are Lady Fenn, Ambrose Smith, David Haggart, and Murtagh. Let us deal with each in turn:

In our opening chapter we referred to the lines in *Lavengro*, where Borrow recalls his early impressions of his native town, or at least the town in the neighbourhood of the hamlet in which he was born. Borrow, we may be sure, would have repudiated "Dumpling Green" if he could. The name had a humorous suggestion. To this day they call boys from Norfolk "Norfolk Dumplings" in the neighbouring shires. But East Dereham was something to be proud of. In it had died the writer who, through the greater part of Borrow's life, remained the favourite poet of that half of England which professed the Evangelical creed in which Borrow was brought up. Cowper was buried here by the side of Mary Unwin, and every Sunday little George would see his tomb just as Henry Kingsley was wont to see the tombs in Chelsea Old Church. The fervour of devotion to Cowper's memory that obtained in those early days must have been a stimulus to the boy, who from the first had ambitions far beyond anything that he was to achieve. Here was his first lesson. The second came from Lady Fenn—a more vivid impression for the child. Twenty years before Borrow was born Cowper had sung her merits in his verse. She and her golden-headed cane are commemorated in *Lavengro*. Dame Eleanor Fenn had made a reputation in her time. As "Mrs. Teachwell" and "Mrs. Lovechild" she had published books for the young of a most improving character, *The Child's Grammar*, *The Mother's Grammar*, *A Short History of Insects*, and *Cobwebs to Catch Flies* being of the number. The forty-fourth edition of *The Child's Grammar* by Mrs. Lovechild appeared in 1851, and the twenty-second edition of *The Mother's Grammar* in 1849. But it is her husband that her name most recalls to us. Sir John Fenn gave us the delightful Paston Letters—of which Horace Walpole said that "they make all other letters not worth reading." Walpole described "Mr. Fenn of East Dereham in Norfolk" as "a smatterer in antiquity, but a very good sort of man." Fenn, who held the original documents of the Letters, sent his first two volumes, when published, to Buckingham Palace, and the King acknow-

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dedged the gifts by knighting the editor, who, however, died in 1794, before George Borrow was born. His widow survived until 1813, and Borrow was in his seventh or eighth year when he caught these notable glimpses of his "Lady Bountiful," who lived in "the half-aristocratic mansion" of the town. But we know next to nothing of Borrow in East Dereham, from which indeed he departed in his eighth year. There are, however, interesting references to his memories of the place in *Lavengro*, the best of which is when he goes to church with the gypsies and dreams of an incident in his childhood:

It appeared as if I had fallen asleep in the pew of the old church of pretty Dereham. I had occasionally done so when a child, and had suddenly woke up. Yes, surely, I had been asleep and had woke up; but no! if I had been asleep I had been waking in my sleep, struggling, striving, learning and unlearning in my sleep. Years had rolled away whilst I had been asleep—ripe fruit had fallen, green fruit had come on whilst I had been asleep—how circumstances had altered, and above all myself whilst I had been asleep. No, I had not been asleep in the old church! I was in a pew, it is true, but not the pew of black leather in which I sometimes fell asleep in days of yore, but in a strange pew; and then my companions, they were no longer those of days of yore. I was no longer with my respectable father and mother, and my dear brother, but with the gypsy cral and his wife, and the gigantic Tawno, the Antinous of the dusky people. And what was I myself? No longer an innocent child but a moody man, bearing in my face, as I knew well, the marks of my strivings and strugglings; of what I had learnt and unlearnt.

But Borrow left Dereham in his eighth year, only to revisit it when famous.

In *Lavengro* Borrow recalls childish memories of Canterbury and of Hythe, at which latter place he saw the church vault filled with ancient skulls as we may see it there to-day. And after that the book which impressed itself most vividly upon his memory was *Robinson Crusoe*. How much he came to revere Defoe the pages of *Lavengro* most eloquently reveal to us. "Hail to thee, spirit of Defoe! What does not my own poor self owe to thee?" In 1810-11 his father was in the barracks at Norman Cross in Huntingdonshire. Here the Government had bought a large tract of land, and built upon it a huge wooden prison, and overlooking this a substantial barrack also of wood, the only brick building on the

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land being the house of the Commandant. The great building was destined for the soldiers taken prisoners in the French wars. The place was constructed to hold 5000 prisoners, and 500 men were employed by the War Office in 1808 upon its construction. The first batch of prisoners were the victims of the battle of Vimeiro in that year. Borrow's description of the hardships of the prisoners has been called in question by a later writer, Arthur Brown, who denies the story of bad food and "straw-plait hunts," and charges Borrow with recklessness of statement. "What could have been the matter with the man to write such stuff as this?" asks Brown in reference to Borrow's story of bad meat and bad bread: which was not treating a great author with quite sufficient reverence. Borrow was but recalling memories of childhood, a period when one swallow does make a summer. He had doubtless seen examples of what he described, although it may not have been the normal condition of things. Brown's own description of the Norman Cross prison was interwoven with a love romance, in which a French officer fell in love with a girl of the neighbouring village of Yaxley, and after Waterloo returned to England and married her. When he wrote his story a very old man was still living at Yaxley, who remembered, as a boy, having often seen the prisoners on the road, some very well dressed, some in tatters, a few in uniform. The milestone is still pointed out which marked the limit beyond which the officer-prisoners might not walk. The buildings were destroyed in 1814, when all the prisoners were sent home, and the house of the Commandant, now a private residence, alone remains to recall this episode in our history. But Borrow's most vivid memory of Norman Cross was connected with the viper given to him by an old man, who had rendered it harmless by removing the fangs. It was the possession of this tame viper that enabled the child of eight—this was Borrow's age at the time—to impress the gypsies that he met soon afterwards, and particularly the boy Ambrose Smith, whom Borrow introduced to the world in *Lavengro* as Jasper Petulengro. Borrow's frequent meetings with Petulengro are no doubt many of them mythical. He was an imaginative writer, but Petulengro was a very real person, who lived the usual roving gypsy life. There is no reason to assume otherwise than that Borrow did actually meet him

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at Norman Cross when he was eight years old, and Ambrose a year younger, and not thirteen as Borrow states. In the original manuscript of *Lavengro* in my possession, "Ambrose" is given instead of "Jasper," and the name was altered as an afterthought. It is of course possible that Borrow did not actually meet Jasper until his arrival in Norwich, for in the first half of the nineteenth century various gypsy families were in the habit of assembling their carts and staking their tents on the heights above Norwich, known as Mousehold Heath, that glorious tract of country that has been rendered memorable in history by the tragic life of Kett the tanner, and has been immortalised in painting by Turner and Crome. Here were assembled the Smiths and Hernes and Boswells, names familiar to every student of gypsy lore. Jasper Petulengro, as Borrow calls him, or Ambrose Smith, to give him his real name, was the son of Faden Smith, and his name of Ambrose was derived from his uncle, Ambrose Smith, who was transported for stealing harness. Ambrose was twice married, and it was his second wife, Sanspirella Herne, who comes into the Borrow story. He had families by both his wives. Ambrose had an extraordinary varied career. It will be remembered by readers of the *Zincali* that when he visited Borrow at Oulton in 1842 he complained that "There is no living for the poor people, brother, the chokengres (police) pursue us from place to place, and the gorgios are become either so poor or miserly that they grudge our cattle a bite of grass by the wayside, and ourselves a yard of ground to light a fire upon." After a time Ambrose left the eastern counties and crossed to Ireland. In 1868 he went to Scotland, and there seems to have revived his fortunes. In 1878 he and his family were encamped at Knockenhair Park, about a mile from Dunbar. Here Queen Victoria, who was staying at Broxmouth Park near by with the Dowager Duchess of Roxburghe, became interested in the gypsies, and paid them a visit. This was in the summer of 1878. Ambrose was then a very old man. He died in the following October. His wife, Sanspi or Sanspirella, received a message of sympathy from the Queen. Very shortly after Ambrose's death, however, most of the family went off to America, where doubtless they are now scattered, many of them, it may be, leading successful lives, utterly oblivious of the associations of one

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of their ancestors with Borrow and his great book. Ambrose Smith was buried in Dunbar cemetery, the Christian service being read over his grave, and his friends erected a stone to him which bears the following inscription:—

In Memory of  
AMBROSE SMITH, who died 22nd  
October 1878, aged 74 years.

Alm  
THOMAS, his son,  
who died 28th May 1879, aged 48 years.

Three years separated the sojourn of the Borrow family at Norman Cross from their sojourn in Edinburgh—three years of continuous wandering. The West Norfolk Militia were watching the French prisoners at Norman Cross for fifteen months. After that we have glimpses of them at Colchester, at East Dereham again, at Harwich, at Leicester, at Huddersfield, concerning which place Borrow incidentally in *Wild Wales* writes of having been at school, in Sheffield, in Berwick-on-Tweed, and finally the family are in Edinburgh, where they arrive on 6th April, 1813. We have already referred to Borrow's presence at the High School of Edinburgh, the school sanctified by association with Walter Scott and so many of his illustrious fellow-countrymen. He and his brother were at the High School for a single session, that is, for the winter session of 1813-14, although with the licence of a maker of fiction he claimed, in *Lavengro*, to have been there for two years. But it is not in this brief period of schooling of a boy of ten that we find the strongest influence that Edinburgh gave to Borrow. Rather may we seek it in the acquaintanceship with the once too notorious David Haggart. Seven years later than this all the peoples of the three kingdoms were discussing David Haggart, the Scots Jack Sheppard, the clever young prison-breaker, who was hanged at Edinburgh in 1821 for killing his gaoler in Dumfries prison. How much David Haggart filled the imagination of every one who could read in the early years of last century is demonstrated by a reference to the Library Catalogue of the British Museum, where we find pamphlet after pamphlet, broadsheet after broadsheet, treating of the adventures, trial, and execution

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of this youthful gaolbird. But by far the most valuable publication with regard to Haggart is one that Borrow must have read in his youth. This was a life of Haggart written by himself, a little book that had a wide circulation. From this little biography we learn that Haggart was born in Golden Acre, near Canon-Mills, in the county of Edinburgh in 1801, his father, John Haggart, being a gamekeeper, and in later years a dog-trainer. The boy was at school under Mr. Robin Gibson at Canon-Mills for two years. He left school at ten years of age, and from that time until his execution seems to have had a continuous career of thieving. He tells us that before he was eleven years old he had stolen a bantam cock from a woman belonging to the New Town of Edinburgh. He went with another boy to Currie, six miles from Edinburgh, and there stole a pony, but this was afterwards returned. When but twelve years of age he attended Leith races, and it was here that he enlisted in the Norfolk Militia, then stationed in Edinburgh Castle. This may very well have brought him into contact with Borrow in the way described in *Lavengro*. He was only, however, in the regiment for a year, for when it was sent back to England the Colonel in command of it obtained young Haggart's discharge. These dates coincide with Borrow's presence in Edinburgh. Haggart's history for the next five or six years was in truth merely that of a wandering pick-pocket, sometimes in Scotland, sometimes in England, and finally he became a notorious burglar. Incidentally he refers to a girl with whom he was in love. Her name was Mary Hill. She belonged to Ecclefechan, which Haggart more than once visited. He must therefore have known Carlyle, who had not then left his native village. In 1820 we find him in Edinburgh, carrying on the same sort of depredations both there and at Leith—now he steals a silk plaid, now a greatcoat, and now a silver teapot. These thefts, of course, landed him in gaol, out of which he breaks rather dramatically, fleeing with a companion to Kelso. He had, indeed, more than one experience of gaol. Finally, we find him in the prison of Dumfries destined to stand his trial for "one act of house-breaking, eleven cases of theft, and one of prison-breaking." While in prison at Dumfries he planned another escape, and in the attempt to hit a gaoler named Morrin on the head with a stone he unexpectedly killed him. His

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escape from Dumfries gaol after this murder, and his later wanderings, are the most dramatic part of his book. He fled through Carlisle to Newcastle, and then thought that he would be safer if he returned to Scotland, where he found the rewards that were offered for his arrest faced him wherever he went. He turned up again in Edinburgh, where he seems to have gone about freely, although reading everywhere the notices that a reward of seventy guineas was offered for his apprehension. Then he fled to Ireland, where he thought that his safety was assured. At Dromore he was arrested and brought before the magistrate, but he spoke with an Irish brogue, and declared that his name was John M'Colgan, and that he came from Armagh. He escaped from Dromore gaol by jumping through a window, and actually went so far as to pay three pound ten shillings for his passage to America, but he was afraid of the sea, and changed his mind, and lost his passage money at the last moment. After this he made a tour right through Ireland, in spite of the fact that the *Dublin Hus and Cry* had a description of his person which he read more than once. His assurance was such that in Tullamore he made a pig-driver apologise before the magistrate for charging him with theft, although he had been living on nothing else all the time he was in Ireland. Finally, he was captured, being recognised by a policeman from Edinburgh. He was brought from Ireland to Dumfries, landed in Calton gaol, Edinburgh, and was tried and executed.

We may pass over the brief sojourn in Norwich that was Borrow's lot in 1814, when the West Norfolk Militia left Scotland. When Napoleon escaped from Elba the West Norfolk Regiment was despatched to Ireland, and Captain Borrow again took his family with him. We find the boy with his family at Clonmel from May to December of 1815. Here Borrow's elder brother, now a boy of fifteen, was promoted from Ensign to Lieutenant. In January, 1816, the Borrowes moved to Templemore, returning to England in May of that year. Borrow, we see, was less than a year in Ireland, and he was only thirteen years of age when he left the country. But it seems to have been the greatest influence that guided his career. Three of the most fascinating chapters in *Lavengro* were one outcome of that brief sojourn, a thirst for the acquirement of languages was another, and perhaps a taste for romancing a third. Borrow never came to have the

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least sympathy with the Irish race, or its national aspirations. As the son of a half-educated soldier he did not come in contact with any but the vagabond element of Ireland, exactly as his father had done before him. Captain Borrow was asked on one occasion what language is being spoken:

"Irish," said my father with a loud voice, "and a bad language it is. . . . There's one part of London where all the Irish live—at least the worst of them—and there they hatch their villainies to speak this tongue."

And Borrow followed his father's prejudices throughout his life, although in the one happy year in which he wrote *The Bible in Spain* he was able to do justice to the country that had inspired so much of his work:

Honour to Ireland and her "hundred thousand welcomes"! Her fields have long been the greenest in the world; her daughters the fairest; her sons the bravest and most eloquent. May they never cease to be so.<sup>1</sup>

In later years Orangemen were to him the only attractive element in the life of Ireland, and we may be sure that he was not displeased when his stepdaughter married one of them. Yet the creator of literature works more wisely than he knows, and Borrow's books have won the wise and benign appreciation of many an Irish and Roman Catholic reader, whose nationality and religion Borrow would have anathematised. Irishmen may forgive Borrow much, because he was one of the first of modern English writers to take their language seriously.<sup>2</sup> It is true that he had but the most superficial knowledge of it. He admits—in *Wild Wales*—that he only knew it "by ear." The abundant Irish literature that has been so diligently studied during the last quarter of a century was a closed book to Borrow, whose few translations from the Irish have but little value. Yet

<sup>1</sup> *The Bible in Spain*, ch. xx.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Johnson was the first as Borrow was the second to earn this distinction. Johnson, as reported by Boswell, says:

"I have long wished that the Irish literature were cultivated. Ireland is known by tradition to have been once the seat of piety and learning, and surely it would be very acceptable to all those who are curious on the origin of nations or the affinities of languages to be further informed of the evolution of a people so ancient and once so illustrious. I hope that you will continue to cultivate this kind of learning which has too long been neglected, and which, if it be suffered to remain in oblivion for another century, may perhaps never be retrieved."

## The Life of George Borrow

the very appreciation of Irish as a language to be seriously studied in days before Dr. George Sigerson and Dr. Douglas Hyde had waxed enthusiastic and practical kindles our gratitude. Then what a character is Murtagh. We are sure there was a Murtagh, although, unlike Borrow's other boyish and vagabond friend Haggart, we know nothing about him but what Borrow has to tell. Yet what a picture is this where Murtagh wants a pack of cards:

"I say, Murtagh!"

"Yes, Shorsha dear!"

"I have a pack of cards."

"You don't say so, Shorsha ma vourneen?—you don't say that you have cards fifty-two?"

"I do, though; and they are quite new—never been once used."

"And you'll be lending them to me, I warrant?"

"Don't think it!—But I'll sell them to you, joy, if you like."

"Hanam mon Dioul! am I not after telling you that I have no money at all?"

"But you have as good as money, to me, at least; and I'll take it in exchange."

"What's that, Shorsha dear?"

"Irish!"

"Irish?"

"Yes, you speak Irish; I heard you talking it the other day to the cripple. You shall teach me Irish."

"And is it a language-master you'd be making of me?"

"To be sure!—what better can you do?—it would help you to pass your time at school. You can't learn Greek, so you must teach Irish!"

Before Christmas, Murtagh was playing at cards with his brother Denis, and I could speak a considerable quantity of broken Irish.<sup>1</sup>

With what distrust as we learn again and again in *Lavengro* did Captain Borrow follow his son's inclination towards languages, and especially the Irish language, in his early years, although anxious that he should be well grounded in Latin. Little did the worthy Captain dream that this, and this alone, was to carry down his name through the ages:

Ah, that Irish! How frequently do circumstances, at first sight the most trivial and unimportant, exercise a mighty and permanent influence on our habits and pursuits!—how frequently is a stream turned aside from its natural course by some little rock or knoll, causing it to make an abrupt turn! On a wild

<sup>1</sup> *Lavengro*.

## A Wandering Childhood

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road in Ireland I had heard Irish spoken for the first time; and I was seized with a desire to learn Irish, the acquisition of which, in my case, became the stepping-stone to other languages. I had previously learnt Latin, or rather Lilly, but neither Latin nor Lilly made me a philologist.

Borrow was never a philologist, but this first inclination for Irish was to lead him later to Spanish, to Welsh, and above all to Romany, and to make of him the most beloved traveller and the strangest vagabond in all English literature.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE GURNEYS AND THE TAYLORS OF NORWICH

NORWICH may claim to be one of the most fascinating cities in the kingdom. To-day it is known to the wide world by its canaries and its mustard, although its most important industry is the boot trade, in which it employs some eight thousand persons. To the visitor it has many attractions. The lovely cathedral with its fine Norman arches, the Erpingham Gate so splendidly Gothic, the noble Castle Keep so imposingly placed with the cattle-market below—these are all as Borrow saw them nearly a century ago. So also is the church of St. Peter Mancroft, where Sir Thomas Browne lies buried. And to the picturesque Mousehold Heath you may still climb and recall one of the first struggles for liberty and progress that past ages have seen, the Norfolk rising under Robert Kett which has only not been glorified in song and in picture, because—

Treason doth never prosper—what's the reason?  
Why if it prosper none dare call it treason.

And Kett's so-called rebellion was destined to failure, and its leader to cruel martyrdom. Mousehold Heath has been made the subject of paintings by Turner and Crome, and of fine word pictures by George Borrow. When Borrow and his parents lighted upon Norwich in 1814 and 1816 the city had inspiring literary associations. Before the invention of railways it seemed not uncommon for a fine intellectual life to emanate from this or that cathedral city. Such an intellectual life was associated with Lichfield when the Darwins and the Edgeworths gathered at the Bishop's Palace around Dr. Seward and his accomplished daughters. Norwich has more than once been such a centre. The first occasion was in the period of which we write, when the Taylors and the Gurneys flourished in a region of ideas; the second was during the years from 1837 to 1849, when

## Gurneys and Taylors of Norwich

Edward Stanley held the bishopric. This later period does not come into our story, as by that time Borrow had all but left Norwich. But of the earlier period, the period of Borrow's more or less fitful residence in Norwich—1814 to 1833—we are tempted to write at some length. There were three separate literary and social forces in Norwich in the first decades of the nineteenth century—the Gurneys of Earlham, the Taylor-Austin group, and William Taylor, who was in no way related to Mrs. John Taylor and her daughter, Sarah Austin. The Gurneys were truly a remarkable family, destined to leave their impress upon Norwich and upon a wider world. At the time of his marriage in 1773 to Catherine Bell, John Gurney, wool-stapler of Norwich, took his young wife, whose face has been preserved in a canvas by Gainsborough, to live in the old Court House in Magdalen Street, which had been the home of two generations of the Gurney family. In 1786 John Gurney went with his continually growing family to live at Earlham Hall, some two or three miles out of Norwich on the Earlham Road. Here that family of eleven children—one boy had died in infancy—grew up. Not one but has an interesting history, which is recorded by Mr. Augustus Hare and other writers. Elizabeth, the fourth daughter, married Joseph Fry, and as Elizabeth Fry attained to a world-wide fame as a prison reformer. Hannah married Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton of Slave Trade Abolition; Richenda, the Rev. Francis Cunningham, who sent George Borrow upon his career; while Louisa married Samuel Hoare of Hampstead. Of her Joseph John Gurney said at her death in 1836 that she was "superior in point of talent to any other of my father's eleven children." It is with the eleventh child, however, that we have mainly to do, for this son, Joseph John Gurney, alone appears in Borrow's pages. The picture of these eleven Quaker children growing up to their various destinies under the roof of Earlham Hall is an attractive one. Men and women of all creeds accepted the catholic Quaker's hospitality. Mrs. Opie and a long list of worthies of the past come before us, and when Mr. Gurney, in 1802, took his six unmarried daughters to the Lakes Old Crome accompanied them as drawing-master.

In 1803—the year of Borrow's birth—John Gurney became a partner in the great London Bank of Overend

## The Life of George Borrow

and Gurney, and his son, Joseph John, in that same year went up to Oxford. In 1809 Joseph returned to take his place in the bank, and to preside over the family of unmarried sisters at Earlham, father and mother being dead, and many members of the family distributed. Incidentally, we are told by Mr. Hare that the Gurneys of Earlham at this time drove out with four black horses, and that when Bishop Bathurst, Stanley's predecessor, required horses for State occasions to drive him to the cathedral, he borrowed these, and the more modest episcopal horses took the Quaker family to their meeting-house. It does not come within the scope of this book to trace the fortunes of these eleven remarkable Gurney children, or even of Borrow's momentary acquaintance, Joseph John Gurney. His residence at Earlham, and his life of philanthropy, are a romance in a way, although one wonders whether if the name of Gurney had not been associated with so much of virtue and goodness the crash that came long after Joseph John Gurney's death would have been quite so full of affliction for a vast multitude. Joseph John Gurney died in 1847, in his fifty-ninth year; his sister, Mrs. Fry, had died two years earlier. The younger brother and twelfth child—Joseph John being the eleventh—Daniel Gurney, the last of the twelve children, lived till 1880, aged eighty-nine. He had outlived by many years the catastrophe to the great banking firm with which the name of Gurney is associated. This great firm of Overend and Gurney, of which yet another brother, Samuel, was the moving spirit, was organised nine years after his death—in 1865—into a joint-stock company, which failed to the amount of eleven millions in 1866. At the time of the failure, which affected all England, much as did the Liberator's smash a generation later, the only Gurney in the directorate was Daniel Gurney, to whom his sister, Lady Buxton, allowed a pension of £2000 a year. This is a long story to tell by way of introduction to one episode in *Lavengro*. This episode had place in the year 1817, when Borrow was but fourteen years of age and Gurney was twenty-nine. It is doubtful if Borrow met Joseph John Gurney more than on the one occasion. At the commencement of his engagement with the Bible Society he writes to its secretary, Mr. Jowett (18th March, 1833), to say that he must procure from Mr. Cunningham "a letter of introduction from him to John

## Gurneys and Taylors of Norwich

Gurney," and this second and last interview must have taken place at Earlham before his departure for Russia.

But if Borrow was to come very little under the influence of Joseph John Gurney, his destiny was to be considerably moulded by the action of Gurney's brother-in-law, Cunningham, who first put him in touch with the Bible Society. Joseph John Gurney and his sisters were the very life of the Bible Society in those years.

With the famous "Taylors of Norwich" Borrow seems to have had no acquaintance, although he went to school with a connection of that family, James Martineau. These socially important Taylors were in no way related to William Taylor of that city, who knew German literature, and scandalised the more virtuous citizens by that, and perhaps more by his fondness for wine and also for good English beer—a drink over which his friend Borrow was to become lyrical. When people speak of the Norwich Taylors they refer to the family of Dr. John Taylor, who in 1733 was elected to the charge of the Presbyterian congregation in Norwich. His eldest son, Richard, married Margaret, the daughter of a mayor of Norwich of the name of Meadows; and Sarah, another daughter of that same worshipful mayor, married David Martineau, grandson of Gaston Martineau, who fled from France at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.<sup>1</sup> Harriet and James Martineau were grandchildren of this David. The second son of Richard and Margaret Taylor was John, who married Susannah Cook. Susannah is the clever Mrs. John Taylor of this story, and her daughter of even greater ability was Sarah Austin, the wife of the famous jurist. Here we are only concerned with Mrs. John Taylor, called by her friends the "Madame Roland of Norwich." Lucy Aikin describes how she "darned her boy's grey worsted stockings while holding her own with Southey, Brougham, or Mackintosh." One of her daughters married Henry Reeve, and, as I have said, another married John Austin. Borrow was twenty years of age and living in Norwich when Mrs. Taylor died. It is to be regretted that in the early impressionable years his position as a lawyer's clerk did not allow of his coming into a circle in which he might have gained certain qualities of *savoir faire* and *joie de vivre*, which he was all his days to lack. Of the Taylor family

<sup>1</sup> *Three Generations of Englishwomen*, by Janet Ross, vol. 1. p. 3.

## The Life of George Borrow

the Duke of Sussex said that they reversed the ordinary saying that it takes nine tailors to make a man. The witticism has been attributed to Sydney Smith, but Mrs. Ross gives evidence that it was the Duke's—the youngest son of George III. In his *Life of Sir James Mackintosh* Basil Montagu, referring to Mrs. John Taylor, says:

Norwich was always a haven of rest to us, from the literary society with which that city abounded. Dr. Sayers we used to visit, and the high-minded and intelligent William Taylor; but our chief delight was in the society of Mrs. John Taylor, a most intelligent and excellent woman, mild and unassuming, quiet and meek, sitting amidst her large family, occupied with her needle and domestic occupations, but always assisting, by her great knowledge, the advancement of kind and dignified sentiment and conduct.

We note here the reference to "the high-minded and intelligent William Taylor," because William Taylor, whose influence upon Borrow's destiny was so pronounced, has been revealed to many by the slanders of Harriet Martineau, that extraordinary compound of meanness and generosity, of poverty-stricken intelligence and rich endowment. In her *Autobiography*, published in 1877, thirty-four years after Robberds's *Memoir of William Taylor*, she dwells upon the drinking propensities of William Taylor, who was a school-fellow of her father's. She admits, indeed, that Taylor was an ideal son, whose "exemplary filial duty was a fine spectacle to the whole city."

William Taylor's life is pleasantly interlinked with Scott and Southey. Lucy Aikin records that she heard Sir Walter Scott declare to Mrs. Barbauld that Taylor had laid the foundations of his literary career—had started him upon the path of glory through romantic verse to romantic prose, from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* to *Waverley*. It was the reading of Taylor's translation of Bürger's *Lenore* that did all this. "This, madam," said Scott, "was what made me a poet. I had several times attempted the more regular kinds of poetry without success, but here was something that I thought I could do." Southey assuredly loved Taylor, and each threw at the feet of the other the abundant literary learning that both possessed. This we find in a correspondence which, reading more than a century after it was written, still has its charm. The son of a wealthy manufacturer of

## Gurneys and Taylors of Norwich

Norwich, Taylor was born in that city in 1765. He was in early years a pupil of Mrs. Barbauld. At fourteen he was placed in his father's counting-house, and soon afterwards was sent abroad, in the company of one of the partners, to acquire languages. He learnt German thoroughly at a time when few Englishmen had acquaintance with its literature. To Goethe's genius he never did justice, having been offended by that great man's failure to acknowledge a book that Taylor sent to him, exactly as Carlyle and Borrow alike were afterwards offended by similar delinquencies on the part of Walter Scott. When he settled again in Norwich he commenced to write for the magazines, among others for Sir Richard Phillips's *Monthly Magazine*, and to correspond with Southey. At the time Southey was a poor man, thinking of abandoning literature for the law, and hopeful of practising in Calcutta. The Norwich Liberals, however, aspired to a newspaper to be called *The Iris*. Taylor asked Southey to come to Norwich and to become its editor. Southey declined and Taylor took up the task. The *Norwich Iris* lasted for two years. Southey never threw over his friendship for Taylor, although their views ultimately came to be far apart. Writing to Taylor in 1803 he says:

Your theology does nothing but mischief; it serves only to thin the miserable ranks of Unitarianism. The regular troops of infidelity do little harm; and their trumpeters, such as Voltaire and Paine, not much more. But it is such pioneers as Middleton, and you and your German friends, that work underground and sap the very citadel. That *Monthly Magazine* is read by all the Dissenters—I call it the Dissenters' Obituary—and here are you eternally mining, mining, under the shallow faith of their half-learned, half-witted, half-paid, half-starved pastors.

But the correspondence went on apace, indeed it occupies the larger part of Robberds's two substantial volumes. It is in the very last letter from Taylor to Southey that we find an oft-quoted reference to Borrow. The letter is dated 12th March, 1821:

A Norwich young man is construing with me Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* with the view of translating it for the Press. His name is George Henry Borrow, and he has learnt German with extraordinary rapidity; indeed, he has the gift of tongues, and, though not yet eighteen, understands twelve languages—English,

# The Life of George Borrow

Welsh, Erse, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese; he would like to get into the Office for Foreign Affairs, but does not know how.

Although this was the last letter to Southey that is published in the memoir, Taylor visited Southey at Keswick in 1826. Taylor's three volumes of the *Historic Survey of German Poetry* appeared in 1828, 1829, and 1830. Sir Walter Scott, in the last year of his life, wrote from Abbotsford on 23rd April, 1832, to Taylor to protest against an allusion to "William Scott of Edinburgh" being the author of a translation of *Goets von Berlichingen*. Scott explained that he (Walter Scott) was that author, and also made allusion to the fact that he had borrowed with acknowledgment two lines from Taylor's *Lenore* for his own—

Tramp, tramp along the land,  
Splash, splash across the sea,

adding that his recollection of the obligation was infinitely stronger than of the mistake. It would seem, however, that the name "William" was actually on the title-page of the London edition of 1799 of *Goets von Berlichingen*. When Southey heard of the death of Taylor in 1836 he wrote:

I was not aware of my old friend's illness, or I should certainly have written to him, to express that unabated regard which I have felt for him eight-and-thirty years, and that hope which I shall ever feel, that we may meet in the higher state of existence. I have known very few who equalled him in talents—none who had a kinder heart; and there never lived a more dutiful son, or a sincerer friend.

Taylor's many books are now all forgotten. His translation of Bürger's *Lenore* one now only recalls by its effect upon Scott; his translation of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* has been superseded. His voluminous *Historic Survey of German Poetry* only lives through Carlyle's severe review in the *Edinburgh Review*<sup>1</sup> against the many strictures in which Taylor's biographer attempts to defend him. Taylor had none of Carlyle's inspiration. Not a line of his work survives in print in our day, but it was no small thing to have been the friend and correspondent of Southey, whose figure in literary history looms larger now than it did when

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in Carlyle's *Miscellanies*.

## Gurneys and Taylors of Norwich

Emerson asked contemptuously, "Who's Southey?"; and to have been the wise mentor of George Borrow is in itself to be no small thing in the record of letters. There is a considerable correspondence between Taylor and Sir Richard Phillips in Robberds's *Memoir*, and Phillips seemed always anxious to secure articles from Taylor for the *Monthly*, and even books for his publishing-house. Hence the introduction from Taylor that Borrow carried to London might have been most effective if Phillips had had any use for poor and impracticable would-be authors.

## CHAPTER VI

### AT THE NORWICH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

When George Borrow first entered Norwich after the long journey from Edinburgh, Joseph John Gurney, born 1788, was twenty-six years of age, and William Taylor, born 1765, was forty-nine. Borrow was eleven years of age. Captain Borrow took temporary lodgings at the Crown and Angel Inn in St. Stephen's Street, George was sent to the Grammar School, and his elder brother started to learn drawing and painting with John Crome ("Old Crome") of many a fine landscape. But the wanderings of the family were not yet over. Napoleon escaped from Elba, and the West Norfolk Militia were again put on the march. This time it was Ireland to which they were destined, and we have already shadowed forth, with the help of *Lavengro*, that momentous episode. The victory of Waterloo gave Europe peace, and in 1816 the Borrow family returned to Norwich, there to pass many quiet years. In 1819 Captain Borrow was pensioned—eight shillings a day. From 1816 till his father's death in 1824 Borrow lived in Norwich with his family. Their home was in King's Court, Willow Lane, a modest one-storey house in a *cul-de-sac*, which we have already described. In King's Court, Willow Lane, Borrow lived at intervals until his marriage in 1840, and his mother continued to live in the house until, in 1849, she agreed to join her son and daughter-in-law at Oulton. Yet the house comes little into the story of Borrow's life, as do the early houses of many great men of letters, nor do subsequent houses come into his story; the house at Oulton and the house at Hereford Square are equally barren of association; the broad highway and the windy heath were Borrow's natural home. He was never a "civilised" being; he never shone in drawing-rooms. Let us, however, return to Borrow's school-days, of which the records are all too scanty, and not in the least invigorating.

## At the Norwich Grammar School

The Norwich Grammar School has an interesting tradition. We pass to the cathedral through the beautiful Erpingham Gate built about 1420 by Sir Thomas Erpingham, and we find the school on the left. It was originally a chapel, and the porch is at least five hundred years old. The schoolroom is sufficiently old-world-looking for us to imagine the schoolboys of past generations sitting at the various desks. The school was founded in 1547, but the registers have been lost, and so we know little of its famous pupils of earlier days. Lord Nelson and Rajah Brooke are the two names of men of action that stand out most honourably in modern times among the scholars. In literature Borrow had but one schoolfellow, who afterwards came to distinction—James Martineau. Borrow's headmaster was the Reverend Edward Valpy, who held the office from 1810 to 1829, and to whom is credited the destruction of the school archives. Borrow's two years of the Grammar School were not happy ones. Borrow, as we have shown, was not of the stuff of which happy schoolboys are made. He had been a wanderer—Scotland, Ireland, and many parts of England had assisted in a fragmentary education; he was now thirteen years of age, and already a vagabond at heart. But let us hear Dr. Augustus Jessopp, who was headmaster of the same Grammar School from 1859 to 1879. Writing of a meeting of old Norvicensians to greet the Rajah, Sir James Brooke, in 1853, when there was a great "whip" of the "old boys," Dr. Jessopp tells us that Borrow, then living at Yarmouth, did not put in an appearance among his schoolfellows:

My belief is that he never was popular among them, that he never attained a high place in the school, and he was a "free boy." In those days there were a certain number of day boys at Norwich school, who were nominated by members of the Corporation, and who paid no tuition fees; they had to submit to a certain amount of snubbing at the hands of the boarders, who for the most part were the sons of the county gentry. Of course, such a proud boy as George Borrow would resent this, and it seems to have rankled with him all through his life. . . . To talk of Borrow as a "scholar" is absurd. "A picker-up of learning's crumbs" he was, but he was absolutely without any of the training or the instincts of a scholar. He had had little education till he came to Norwich, and was at the Grammar School little more than two years. It is pretty certain that he knew no Greek when he entered there, and he never seems to have acquired more than the elements of that language.

## The Life of George Borrow

Yet the only real influence that Borrow carried away from the Grammar School was concerned with foreign languages. He did take to the French master and exiled priest, Thomas d'Eterville, a native of Caen, who had emigrated to Norwich in 1793. D'Eterville taught French, Italian, and apparently, to Borrow, a little Spanish; and Borrow, with his wonderful memory, must have been his favourite pupil. In the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of *Lavengro* he is pleasantly described by his pupil, who adds, with characteristic "bluff," that d'Eterville said "on our arrival at the conclusion of Dante's *Hell*, 'vous serez un jour un grand philologue, mon cher.'"

Borrow's biographers have dwelt at length upon one episode of his schooldays—the flogging he received from Valpy for playing truant with three other boys. One, by name John Dalrymple, faltered on the way, the two faithful followers of George in his escapade being two brothers named Theodosius and Francis Purland, whose father kept a chemist's shop in Norwich. The three boys wandered away as far as Acle, eleven miles from Norwich, whence they were ignominiously brought back and birched. John Dalrymple's brother Arthur, son of a distinguished Norwich surgeon, who became Clerk of the Peace at Norwich in 1854, and died in 1868, has left a memorandum concerning Borrow, from which I take the following extract:

I was at school with Borrow at the Free School, Norwich, under the Rev. E. Valpy. He was an odd, wild boy, and always wanting to turn Robinson Crusoe or Buccaneer. My brother John was about Borrow's age, and on one occasion Borrow, John, and another, whose name I forget, determined to run away and turn pirates. John carried an old horse pistol and some potatoes as his contribution to the general stock, but his zeal was soon exhausted, he turned back at Thorpe Lunatic Asylum; but Borrow went off to Yarmouth, and lived on the Caister Denes for a few days. I don't remember hearing of any exploits. He had a wonderful facility for learning languages, which, however, he never appears to have turned to account.

James Martineau, afterwards a popular preacher and a distinguished theologian of the Unitarian creed, here comes into the story. He was a contemporary with Borrow at the Norwich Grammar School as already stated, but the two boys had little in common. There was nothing of the vagabond about James Martineau, and concerning Borrow—

## At the Norwich Grammar School

if on no other subject—he would probably have agreed with his sister Harriet, whose views we shall quote in a later chapter. In Martineau's *Memoirs*, voluminous and dull, there is only one reference to Borrow<sup>1</sup>; but a correspondent once ventured to approach the eminent divine concerning the rumour as to Martineau's part in the birching of the author of *The Bible in Spain*, and received the following letter:

35 GORDON SQUARE, LONDON, W.C., December 6, 1895.

DEAR SIR,—Two or three years ago Mr. Egmont Hake (author, I think, of a life of Gordon) sought an interview with me, as reputed to be Borrow's sole surviving schoolfellow, in order to gather information or test traditions about his schooldays. This was with a view to a memoir which he was compiling, he said, out of the literary remains which had been committed to him by his executors. I communicated to him such recollections as I could clearly depend upon and leave at his disposal for publication or for suppression as he might think fit. Under these circumstances I feel that they are rightfully his, and that I am restrained from placing them at disposal elsewhere unless and until he renounces his claim upon them. But though I cannot repeat them at length for public use, I am not precluded from correcting inaccuracies in stories already in circulation, and may therefore say that Mr. Arthur Dalrymple's version of the Yarmouth escapade is wrong in making his brother John a partner in the transaction. John had quite too much sense for that; the only victims of Borrow's romance were two or three silly boys—mere lackeys of Borrow's commanding will—who helped him to make up a kit for the common knapsack by pilferings out of their fathers' shops.

The Norwich gentleman who fell in with the boys lying in the hedgerow near the half-way inn knew one of them, and wormed out of him the drift of their enterprise, and engaging a postchaise packed them all into it, and in his gig saw them safe home.

It is true that I had to *hoist* (not "horse") Borrow for his flogging, but not that there was anything exceptional or capable of leaving permanent scars in the infliction. Mr. Valpy was not given to excess of that kind.

I have never read *Lavengro*, and cannot give any opinion about the correct spelling of the "Exul sacerdos" name.

Borrow's romance and William Taylor's love of paradox would doubtless often run together, like a pair of well-matched steeds, and carry them away in the same direction. But there was a strong—almost wild—religious sentiment in Borrow, of which only faint traces appear in W. T. In Borrow it had always a tendency to pass from a sympathetic to an antipathetic form. He

<sup>1</sup> This is a contemptuous reference in Martineau's own words to "George Borrow, the writer and actor of romance."

# The Life of George Borrow

used to gather about him three or four favourite schoolfellows after they had learned their class lesson and before the class was called up, and with a sheet of paper and book on his knee, invent and tell a story, making rapid little pictures of each *dramatis persona* that came upon the stage. The plot was woven and spread out with much ingenuity, and the characters were various and well discriminated. But two of them were sure to turn up in every tale, the Devil and the Pope, and the working of the drama invariably had the same issue—the utter ruin and disgrace of these two potentates. I had often thought that there was a presage here of the mission which produced *The Bible in Spain*.—  
I am, dear sir, very truly yours,  
JAMES MARTINEAU.

Yet it is amusing to trace the story through various phases. Dr. Martineau's letter was the outcome of his attention being called to a statement made in a letter written by a lady in Hampstead to a friend in Norwich, which runs as follows:

11th Nov. 1893.

Dr. Martineau, to amuse some boys at a school treat, told us about George Borrow, his schoolfellow: he was always reading adventures of smugglers and pirates, etc., and at last, to carry out his ideas, got a set of his schoolfellows to promise to join him in an expedition to Yarmouth, where he had heard of a ship that he thought would take them. The boys saved all the food they could from their meals, and what money they had, and one morning started very early to walk to Yarmouth. They got halfway—to Blofield, I think—when they were so tired they had to rest by the roadside, and eat their lunch. While they were resting a gentleman, whose son was at the Free School, passed in his gig. He thought it was very odd so many boys, some of whom he had seen, should be waiting about, so he drove back and asked them if they would come to dine with him at the inn. Of course they were only too glad, poor boys: but as soon as he had got them all in he sent his servant with a letter to Mr. Valpy, who sent a coach and brought them all back. You know what a cruel man that Dr. V. was. He made Dr. Martineau take poor Borrow on his back, "horse him," I think he called it, and flogged him so that Dr. M. said he would carry the marks for the rest of his life, and he had to keep his bed for a fortnight. The other boys got off with lighter punishment, but Borrow was the ring-leader. Those were the "good old times"! I have heard Dr. M. say that not for another life would he go through the misery he suffered as "town boy" at that school.

Miss Frances Power Cobbe, who lived next door to Borrow in Hereford Square, Brompton, in the 'sixties, as we shall see later, has a word to say on the point:

## At the Norwich Grammar School

Dr. Martineau once told me that he and Borrow had been schoolfellows at Norwich some sixty years before. Borrow had persuaded several of his other companions to rob their fathers' tills, and then the party set forth to join some smugglers on the coast. By degrees the truants all fell out of line and were picked up, tired and hungry, along the road, and brought back to Norwich School, where condign chastisement awaited them. George Borrow, it seems, received his large share *horsed* on James Martineau's back! The early connection between the two old men, as I knew them, was irresistibly comic to my mind. Somehow when I asked Mr. Borrow once to come and meet some friends at our house he accepted our invitation as usual, but, on finding that Dr. Martineau was to be of the party, hastily withdrew his acceptance on a transparent excuse; nor did he ever after attend our little assemblies without first ascertaining that Dr. Martineau was not to be present.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Valpy of the Norwich Grammar School is scarcely to be blamed that he was not able to make separate rules for a quite abnormal boy. Yet, if he could have known, Borrow was better employed playing truant and living up to his life-work as a glorified vagabond than in studying in the ordinary school routine. George Borrow belonged to a type of boy—there are many such—who learn much more out of school than in its bounds; and the boy Borrow, picking up brother vagabonds in Tombland Fair, and already beginning, in his own peculiar way, his language craze, was laying the foundations that made *Lavengro* possible.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Frances Power Cobbe as told by Herself*, ch. xvii.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN A LAWYER'S OFFICE

DOUBTS were very frequently expressed in Borrow's lifetime as to his having really been articled to a solicitor, but that point has been set at rest by reference to the Record Office. Borrow was articled to Simpson and Rackham of Tuck's Court, St. Giles's, Norwich, "for the term of five years"—from March, 1819, to March, 1824,—and these five years were spent in and about Norwich, and were full of adventure of a kind with which the law had nothing to do. If Borrow had had the makings of a lawyer he could not have entered the profession under happier auspices. The firm was an old established one even in his day. It had been established in Tuck's Court as Simpson and Rackham, then it became Rackham and Morse, Rackham, Cooke and Rackham, and Rackham and Cooke; finally, Tom Rackham, a famous Norwich man in his day, moved to another office, and the firm of lawyers who at present occupy the original offices is called Leathes Prior and Sons. Borrow has told us frankly what a poor lawyer's clerk he made—he was always thinking of things remote from that profession, of gypsies, of prize-fighters, and of word-makers. Yet he loved the head of the firm, William Simpson, who must have been a kind and tolerant guide to the curious youth. Simpson was for a time Town Clerk of Norwich, and his portrait hangs in the Blackfriars Hall. Borrow went to live with Mr. Simpson in the Upper Close near the Grammar School. Archdeacon Groome recalled having seen Borrow "reserved and solitary" haunting the precincts of the playground; another school-boy, William Drake, remembered him as "tall, spare, dark-complexioned."<sup>1</sup>

Borrow tells us how at this time he studied the Welsh language and later the Danish; his master said that his inattention would assuredly make him a bankrupt, and his father sighed over his eccentric and impracticable son.

<sup>1</sup> *Norwicensian*, 1888, p. 177.

## In a Lawyer's Office

The passion for languages had indeed caught hold of Borrow. Among my Borrow papers I find a memorandum in the handwriting of his stepdaughter, in which she says:

I have often heard his mother say, that when a mere child of eight or nine years, all his pocket-money was spent in purchasing foreign Dictionaries and Grammars; he formed an acquaintance with an old woman who kept a bookstall in the market-place of Norwich, whose son went voyages to Holland with cattle, and brought home Dutch books, which were eagerly bought by little George. One day the old woman was crying, and told him that her son was in prison. "For doing what?" asked the child. "For taking a silk handkerchief out of a gentleman's pocket." "Then," said the boy, "your son stole the pocket handkerchief?" "No dear, no, my son did not steal,—he only glyfaked."

We have no difficulty in recognising here the heroine of the Moll Flanders episode in *Lavengro*. But it was not from casual meetings with Welsh grooms and Danes and Dutchmen that Borrow acquired even such command of various languages as was undoubtedly his. We have it on the authority of an old fellow-pupil at the Grammar School, Burcham, afterwards a London police-magistrate, that William Taylor gave him lessons in German,<sup>1</sup> but he acquired most of his varied knowledge in these impressionable years in the Corporation Library of Norwich. Dr. Knapp found, in his very laudable examination of some of the books, Borrow's neat pencil notes, the making of which was not laudable on the part of his hero. One book here marked was on ancient Danish literature, the author of which, Olaus Wormius, gave him the hint for calling himself Olaus Borrow for a time—a signature that we find in some of Borrow's published translations. Borrow at this time had aspirations of a literary kind, and Thomas Campbell accepted a translation of Schiller's *Diver*, which was signed "O. B." There were also translations from the German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish, in the *Monthly Magazine*. Clearly Borrow was becoming a formidable linguist, if not a very exact master of words. Still he remained a vagabond, and loved to wander over Mousehold Heath, to the gypsy encampment, and to make friends with the Romany folk; he loved also to haunt the horse fairs for which Norwich was so celebrated; and he was not averse from the companionship of wilder spirits

<sup>1</sup> The *Britannia* newspaper, 26th June, 1851.

## The Life of George Borrow

who loved pugilism, if we may trust *Lavengro*, and if we may assume, as we justly may, that he many times cast youthful, sympathetic eyes on John Thurtell in these years, the to-be murderer of Weare, then actually living with his father in a house on the Ipswich Road, Thurtell, the father, being in no mean position in the city—an alderman, and a sheriff in 1815. Yes, there was plenty to do and to see in Norwich, and Borrow's memories of it were nearly always kindly.

At the very centre of Borrow's Norwich life was William Taylor, concerning whom we have already written much. It was a Jew named Mousha, a quack it appears, who pretended to know German and Hebrew, and had but a smattering of either language, who first introduced Borrow to Taylor, and there is a fine dialogue between the two in *Lavengro*, of which this is the closing fragment:

"Are you happy?" said the young man.

"Why, no! And, between ourselves, it is that which induces me to doubt sometimes the truth of my opinions. My life, upon the whole, I consider a failure; on which account, I would not counsel you, or anyone, to follow my example too closely. It is getting late, and you had better be going, especially as your father, you say, is anxious about you. But, as we may never meet again, I think there are three things which I may safely venture to press upon you. The first is, that the decencies and gentlenesses should never be lost sight of, as the practice of the decencies and gentlenesses is at all times compatible with independence of thought and action. The second thing which I would wish to impress upon you is, that there is always some eye upon us; and that it is impossible to keep anything we do from the world, as it will assuredly be divulged by somebody as soon as it is his interest to do so. The third thing which I would wish to press upon you——"

"Yes," said the youth, eagerly bending forward.

"Is"—and here the elderly individual laid down his pipe upon the table—"that it will be as well to go on improving yourself in German!"

Taylor it was who, when Borrow determined to try his fortunes in London with those bundles of unsaleable manuscripts, gave him introductions to Sir Richard Phillips and to Thomas Campbell. It was in the agnostic spirit that he had learned from Taylor that he wrote during this period to his one friend in London, Roger Kerrison. Kerrison was grandson of Sir Roger Kerrison, Mayor of Norwich in 1778, as his son Thomas was after him in 1806. Roger was articled,

## In a Lawyer's Office

as was Borrow, to the firm of Simpson and Rackham, while his brother Allday was in a drapery store in Norwich, but with mind bent on commercial life in Mexico. George was teaching him Spanish in these years as a preparation for his great adventure. Roger had gone to London to continue his professional experience. He finally became a Norwich solicitor and died in 1882. Allday went to Zacatecas, Mexico, and acquired riches. John Borrow followed him there and met with an early death, as we have seen. Borrow and Roger Kerrison were great friends at this time; but when *Lavengro* was written they had ceased to be this, and Roger is described merely as an "acquaintance" who had found lodgings for him on his first visit to London. As a matter of fact that trip to London was made easy for Borrow by the opportunity given to him of sharing lodgings with Roger Kerrison at Milman Street, Bedford Row, where Borrow put in an appearance on 1st April, 1824, some two months after the following letter was written:

TO MR. ROGER KERRISON, 18 MILMAN STREET,  
BEDFORD ROW.

NORWICH, *Jany.* 20, 1824.

DEAREST ROGER,—I did not imagine when we separated in the street, on the day of your departure from Norwich, that we should not have met again: I had intended to have come and seen you off, but happening to dine at W. Barron's I got into discourse, and the hour slipped past me unawares.

I have been again for the last fortnight laid up with that detestable complaint which destroys my strength, impairs my understanding, and will in all probability send me to the grave, for I am now much worse than when you saw me last. But *nil desperandum est*, if ever my health mends, and possibly it may by the time my clerkship is expired, I intend to live in London, write plays, poetry, etc., abuse religion and get myself prosecuted, for I would not for an ocean of gold remain any longer than I am forced in this dull and gloomy town.

I have no news to regale you with, for there is none abroad, but I live in the expectation of shortly hearing from you, and being informed of your plans and projects; fear not to be prolix, for the slightest particular cannot fail of being interesting to one who loves you far better than parent or relation, or even than the God whom bigots would teach him to adore, and who subscribes himself, Yours unalterably,

GEORGE BORROW.

Borrow might improve his German—not sufficiently, as we shall see in our next chapter—but he would certainly

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never make a lawyer. Long years afterwards, when, as an old man, he was frequently in Norwich, he not seldom called at that office in Tuck's Court, where five strange years of his life had been spent. A clerk in Rackham's office in these later years recalls him waiting for the principal as he in his youth had watched others waiting.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. C. F. Martelli of Staple Inn, London, who has so generously placed this information at my disposal. Mr. Martelli writes:

"Old memories brought him to our office for professional advice, and there I saw something of him, and a very striking personality he was, and a rather difficult client to do business with. One peculiarity I remember was that he believed himself to be plagued by autograph hunters, and was reluctant to trust our firm with his signature in any shape or form, and that we in consequence had some trouble in inducing him to sign his will. I have seen him sitting over my fire in my room at that office for hours, half asleep, and crooning out Romany songs while waiting for my chief."

## CHAPTER VIII

### AN OLD-TIME PUBLISHER

*"That's a strange man!" said I to myself, after I had left the house, "he is evidently very clever; but I cannot say that I like him much with his Oxford Reviews and Dairyman's Daughters."—LAVENGRO.*

BORROW lost his father on the 28th February, 1824. He reached London on the 2nd April of the same year, and this was the beginning of his many wanderings. He was armed with introductions from William Taylor, and with some translations in manuscript from Danish and Welsh poetry. The principal introduction was to Sir Richard Phillips, a person of some importance in his day, who has so far received but inadequate treatment in our own. Phillips was active in the cause of reform at a certain period in his life, and would seem to have had many sterling qualities before he was spoiled by success. He was born in the neighbourhood of Leicester, and his father was "in the farming line," and wanted him to work on the farm, but he determined to seek his fortune in London. After a short absence, during which he clearly proved to himself that he was not at present qualified to capture London, young Phillips returned to the farm. Borrow refers to his patron's vegetarianism, and on this point we have an amusing story from his own pen! He had been, when previously on the farm, in the habit of attending to a favourite heifer:

During his sojournment in London this animal had been killed; and on the very day of his return to his father's house, he partook of part of his favourite at dinner, without his being made acquainted with the circumstance of its having been slaughtered during his absence. On learning this, however, he experienced a sudden indisposition; and declared that so great an effect had the idea of his having eaten part of his slaughtered favourite upon him, that he would never again taste animal food; a vow to which he has hitherto firmly adhered.

Farming not being congenial, Phillips hired a small room in Leicester, and opened a school for instruction in the three

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R's, a large blue flag on a pole being his "sign" or signal to the inhabitants of Leicester, who seem to have sent their children in considerable numbers to the young schoolmaster. But little money was to be made out of schooling, and a year later Phillips was, by the kindness of friends, started in a small hosiery shop in Leicester. Throwing himself into politics on the side of reform, Phillips now founded the *Leicester Herald*, to which Dr. Priestley became a contributor. The first number was issued gratis in May, 1792. His *Memoir* informs us that it was an article in this newspaper that secured for its proprietor and editor eighteen months' imprisonment in Leicester gaol, but he was really charged with selling Paine's *Rights of Man*. The worthy knight had probably grown ashamed of *The Rights of Man* in the intervening years, and hence the reticence of the memoir. Phillips's gaoler was the once famous Daniel Lambert, the notorious "fat man" of his day. In gaol Phillips was visited by Lord Moira and the Duke of Norfolk. It was this Lord Moira who said in the House of Lords in 1797 that "he had seen in Ireland the most absurd, as well as the most disgusting tyranny that any nation ever groaned under." Moira became Governor-General of Bengal and Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India. The Duke of Norfolk, a staunch Whig, distinguished himself in 1798 by a famous toast at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Arundel Street, Strand:—"Our sovereign's health—the majesty of the people!" which greatly offended George III., who removed Norfolk from his lord-lieutenancy. Phillips seems to have had a very lax imprisonment, as he conducted the *Herald* from gaol, contributing in particular a weekly letter. Soon after his release he disposed of the *Herald*, or permitted it to die. It was revived a few years later as an organ of Toryism. He had started in gaol another journal, *The Museum*, and he combined this with his hosiery business for some time longer, when an opportune fire relieved him of an apparently uncongenial burden, and with the insurance money in his pocket he set out for London once more. Here he started as a hosier in St. Paul's Churchyard, lodging meantime in the house of a milliner, where he fell in love with one of the apprentices, Miss Griffiths, "a native of Wales." His affections were won, we are naively informed in the *Memoir*, by the young woman's talent in the preparation of a vege-

## An Old-Time Publisher

table pie. This is our first glimpse of Lady Phillips—"a quiet, respectable woman," whom Borrow was to meet at dinner long years afterwards. Inspired, it would seem, by the kindly exhortation of Dr. Priestley, he now transformed his hosiery business in St. Paul's Churchyard into a "literary repository," and started a singularly successful career as a publisher. There he produced his long-lived periodical, *The Monthly Magazine*, which attained to so considerable a fame.

This, then, was the man to whom George Borrow presented himself in 1824. Phillips was fifty-seven years of age. He had made a moderate fortune and lost it, and was now enjoying another perhaps less satisfying; it included the profits of *The Monthly Magazine*, repurchased after his bankruptcy, and some rights in many school-books. But the great publishing establishment in Bridge Street had long been broken up. Borrow would have found Taylor's introduction to Phillips quite useless had the worthy knight not at the moment been keen on a new magazine and seen the importance of a fresh "hack" to help to run it. Moreover, had he not written a great book which only the Germans could appreciate, *Twelve Essays on the Phenomena of Nature*? Here, he thought, was the very man to produce this book in a German dress. Taylor was a thorough German scholar, and he had vouched for the excellent German of his pupil and friend. Hence a certain cordiality which did not win Borrow's regard, but was probably greater than many a young man would receive to-day from a publisher-prince upon whom he might call laden only with a bundle of translations from the Danish and the Welsh. Here—in *Lavengro*—is the interview between publisher and poet, with the editor's factotum Bartlett, whom Borrow calls Taggart, as witness:

"Well, sir, what is your pleasure?" said the big man, in a rough tone, as I stood there, looking at him wistfully—as well I might—for upon that man, at the time of which I am speaking, my principal, I may say my only hopes, rested.

"Sir," said I, "my name is So-and-so, and I am the bearer of a letter to you from Mr. So-and-so, an old friend and correspondent of yours."

The countenance of the big man instantly lost the suspicious and lowering expression which it had hitherto exhibited; he strode forward and, seizing me by the hand, gave me a violent squeeze.

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"My dear sir," said he, "I am rejoiced to see you in London. I have been long anxious for the pleasure—we are old friends, though we have never before met. Taggart," said he to the man who sat at the desk, "this is our excellent correspondent, the friend and pr of our excellent correspondent."

Phillips explains that he has given up publishing, except "under the rose," had only *The Monthly Magazine*, here<sup>1</sup> called *The Magazine*, but contemplated yet another monthly, *The Universal Review*, here called *The Oxford*. He gave Borrow much the same sound advice that a publisher would have given him to-day—that poetry is not a marketable commodity, and that if you want to succeed in prose you must, as a rule, write trash—the most acceptable trash of that day being *The Dairyman's Daughter*, which has sold in hundreds of thousands, and is still much prized by the Evangelical folk who buy the publications of the Religious Tract Society. Phillips, moreover, asked him to dine to meet his wife, his son, and his son's wife, and we know what an amusing account of that dinner Borrow gives in *Lavengro*. Moreover, he set Borrow upon his first piece of hack-work, the *Celebrated Trials*, and gave him something to do upon *The Universal Review* and also upon *The Monthly*. *The Universal* lasted only for six numbers, dying in January, 1825. In that year appeared the six volumes of the *Celebrated Trials*, of which we have something to say in our next chapter. Borrow found Phillips most exacting, always suggesting the names of new criminals, and leaving it to the much sweated author to find the books from which to extract the necessary material. Then came the final catastrophe. Borrow could not translate Phillips's great masterpiece, *Twelve Essays on the Proximate Causes*, into German with any real effectiveness although the testimonial of the enthusiastic Taylor had led Phillips to assume that he could. Borrow, as we shall see, knew many languages, and knew them well colloquially, but he was not a grammarian, and he could not write accurately in any one of the numerous tongues. His wonderful memory gave him the words, but not always any thoroughness of construction. He could make a good translation of a poem by Schiller, because he brought his own poetic fancy to the venture, but he had no interest in Phillips's philosophy, and so he doubtless made a very bad

<sup>1</sup> In *Lavengro*.

## An Old-Time Publisher

translation, as German friends were soon able to assure Phillips, who had at last to go to a German for a translation, and the book appeared at Stuttgart in 1826. Meanwhile, Phillips's new magazine, *The Universal Review*, went on its course. It lasted only for a few numbers, as we have said—from March, 1824, to January, 1825—and it was entirely devoted to reviews, many of them written by Borrow, but without any distinction calling for comment to-day. Dr. Knapp thought that Gifford was the editor, with Phillips's son and George Borrow assisting. Gifford translated *Juvenal*, and it was for a long time assumed that Borrow wished merely to disguise Gifford's identity when he referred to his editor as the translator of *Quintilian*. But Sir Leslie Stephen has pointed out in *Literature* that John Carey (1756–1826), who actually edited *Quintilian* in 1822, was Phillips's editor. "All the poetry which I reviewed," Borrow tells us, "appeared to be published at the expense of the authors. All the publications which fell under my notice I treated in a gentlemanly . . . manner—no personalities, no vituperation, no shabby insinuations; decorum, decorum was the order of the day." And one feels that Borrow was not very much at home. But he went on with his *Newgate Lives and Trials*, which, however, were to be published with another imprint, although at the instance of Phillips. By that time he and that worthy publisher had parted company. Probably Phillips had set out for Brighton, which was to be his home for the remainder of his life.

## CHAPTER IX

### "FAUSTUS" AND "ROMANTIC BALLADS"

In the early pages of *Lavengro* Borrow tells us nearly all we are ever likely to know of his sojourn in London in the years 1824 and 1825, during which time he had those interviews with Sir Richard Phillips which are recorded in our last chapter. Dr. Knapp, indeed, prints a little note from him to his friend Kerrison, in which he begs his friend to come to him as he believes he is dying. Roger Kerrison, it would seem, had been so frightened by Borrow's depression and threats of suicide that he had left the lodgings at 16 Milman Street, Bedford Row, and removed himself elsewhere, and so Borrow was left friendless to fight what he called his "horrors" alone. The depression was not unnatural. From his own vivid narrative we learn of Borrow's bitter failure as an author. No one wanted his translations from the Welsh and the Danish, and Phillips clearly had no further use for him after he had compiled his *Newgate Lives and Trials* (Borrow's name in *Lavengro* for *Celebrated Trials*), and was doubtless inclined to look upon him as an impostor for professing, with William Taylor's sanction, a mastery of the German language which had been demonstrated to be false with regard to his own book. No "spirited publisher" had come forward to give reality to his dream thus set down:

I had still an idea that, provided I could persuade any spirited publisher to give these translations to the world, I should acquire both considerable fame and profit; not, perhaps, a world-embracing fame such as Byron's; but a fame not to be sneered at, which would last me a considerable time, and would keep my heart from breaking;—profit, not equal to that which Scott had made by his wondrous novels, but which would prevent me from starving, and enable me to achieve some other literary enterprise. I read and re-read my ballads, and the more I read them the more I was convinced that the public, in the event of their being published, would freely purchase, and hail them with the merited applause.

## "Faustus" and "Romantic Ballads"

He has a tale to tell us in *Lavengro* of a certain *Life and Adventures of Joseph Sell, the Great Traveller*, the purchase of which from him by a publisher at the last moment saved him from starvation and enabled him to take to the road, there to meet the many adventures that have become immortal in the pages of *Lavengro*. Dr. Knapp has encouraged the idea that *Joseph Sell* was a real book, ignoring the fact that the very title suggests doubts, and was probably meant to suggest them. In Norfolk, as elsewhere, a "sell" is a word in current slang used for an imposture or a cheat, and doubtless Borrow meant to make merry with the credulous. There was, we may be perfectly sure, no *Joseph Sell*, and it is more reasonable to suppose that it was the sale of his translation of Klinger's *Faustus* that gave him the much needed money at this crisis. Dr. Knapp pictures Borrow as carrying the manuscript of his translation of *Faustus* with him to London. There is not the slightest evidence of this. It may be reasonably assumed that Borrow made the translation from Klinger's novel during his sojourn in London. It is true the preface is dated "Norwich, April 1825," but Borrow did not leave London until the end of May, 1825, that is to say, until after he had negotiated with "W. Simpkin and R. Marshall," now the well-known firm of Simpkin and Marshall, for the publication of the little volume. That firm, unfortunately, has no record of the transaction. My impression is that Borrow in his wandering after old volumes on crime for his great compilation, *Celebrated Trials*, came across the French translation of Klinger's novel published at Amsterdam. From that translation he acknowledges that he borrowed the plate which serves as frontispiece—a plate entitled "The Corporation Feast." It represents the corporation of Frankfort at a banquet turned by the devil into various animals. It has been erroneously assumed that Borrow had had something to do with the designing of this plate, and that he had introduced the corporation of Norwich in vivid portraiture into the picture. Borrow does, indeed, interpolate a reference to Norwich into his translation of a not too complimentary character, for at that time he had no very amiable feelings towards his native city. Of the inhabitants of Frankfort he says:

They found the people of the place modelled after so unsightly a pattern, with such ugly figures and flat features, that the devil

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owned he had never seen them equalled, except by the inhabitants of an English town called Norwich, when dressed in their Sunday's best.<sup>1</sup>

In the original German version of 1791 we have the town of Nuremberg thus satirised. But Borrow was not the first translator to seize the opportunity of adapting the reference for personal ends. In the French translation of 1798, published at Amsterdam, and entitled *Les Aventures du Docteur Faust*, the translator has substituted Auxerre for Nuremberg. What makes me think that Borrow used only the French version in his translation is the fact that in his preface he refers to the engravings of that version, one of which he reproduced; whereas the engravings are in the German version as well.

Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger (1752-1831), who was responsible for Borrow's "first book," was responsible for much else of an epoch-making character. It was he who by one of his many plays, *Sturm und Drang*, gave a name to an important period of German literature. In 1780 von Klinger entered the service of Russia, and in 1790 married a natural daughter of the Empress Catherine. Thus his novel, *Faust's Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt*, was actually first published at St. Petersburg in 1791. This was seventeen years before Goethe published his first part of *Faust*, a book which by its exquisite poetry was to extinguish for all self-respecting Germans Klinger's turgid prose. Borrow, like the translator of Rousseau's *Confessions* and of many another classic, takes refuge more than once in the asterisk. Klinger's *Faustus*, with much that was bad and even bestial, has merits. The devil throughout shows his victim a succession of examples of "man's inhumanity to man." Borrow nowhere mentions Klinger's name in his book, of which the title-page runs:

*Faustus: His Life, Death, and Descent into Hell. Translated from the German. London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1825.*

I doubt very much if he really knew who was the author, as the book in both the German editions I have seen as well as in the French version bears no author's name on its title-page. A letter of Borrow's in the possession of an American collector indicates that he was back in Norwich in September,

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Death of Faustus*, p. 59.

## "Faustus" and "Romantic Ballads"

1825, after, we may assume, three months' wandering among gypsies and tinkers. It is written from Willow Lane, and is apparently to the publishers of *Faustus*:

As your bill will become payable in a few days, I am willing to take thirty copies of *Faustus* instead of the money. The book has been *burnt* in both the libraries here, and, as it has been talked about, I may perhaps be able to dispose of some in the course of a year or so.

This letter clearly demonstrates that the guileless Simpkin and the equally guileless Marshall had paid Borrow for the right to publish *Faustus*, and even though part of the payment was met by a bill, I think we may safely find in the transaction whatever verity there may be in the *Joseph Sell* episode. "Let me know how you sold your manuscript," writes Borrow's brother to him so late as the year 1829. And this was doubtless *Faustus*. The action of the Norwich libraries in burning the book would clearly have had the sympathy of one of its few reviewers had he been informed of the circumstance. It is thus that the *Literary Gazette* for 16th July, 1825, refers to Borrow's little book:

This is another work to which no respectable publisher ought to have allowed his name to be put. The political allusions and metaphysics, which may have made it popular among a low class in Germany, do not sufficiently season its lewd scenes and coarse descriptions for British palates. We have occasionally publications for the fireside—these are only fit for the fire.

Borrow returned then to Norwich in the autumn of 1825 a disappointed man so far as concerned the giving of his poetical translations to the world, from which he had hoped so much. No "spirited publisher" had been forthcoming, although Dr. Knapp's researches have unearthed a "note" in *The Monthly Magazine*, which, after the fashion of the anticipatory literary gossip of our day, announced that Olaus Borrow was about to issue *Legends and Popular Superstitions of the North*, "in two elegant volumes." But this never appeared. Quite a number of Borrow's translations from divers languages had appeared from time to time, beginning with a version of Schiller's "Diver" in *The New Monthly Magazine* for 1823, continuing with Stolberg's "Ode to a Mountain Torrent" in *The Monthly Magazine*, and including the "Deceived Merman." These

# The Life of George Borrow

he collected into book form and, not to be deterred by the coldness of heartless London publishers, issued them by subscription. Three copies of the slim octavo book lie before me, with separate title-pages:

(1) *Romantic Ballads, Translated from the Danish; and Miscellaneous Pieces by George Borrow.* Norwich: Printed and Published by S. Wilkin, Upper Haymarket, 1826.

(2) *Romantic Ballads, Translated from the Danish; and Miscellaneous Pieces by George Borrow.* London: Published by John Taylor, Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, 1826.

(3) *Romantic Ballads, Translated from the Danish; and Miscellaneous Pieces, by George Borrow.* London: Published by Wightman and Cramp, 24 Paternoster Row, 1826.

The book contains an introduction in verse by Allan Cunningham, whose acquaintance Borrow seems to have made in London. It commences:

Sing, sing, my friend, breathe life again  
Through Norway's song and Denmark's strain:  
On flowing Thames and Forth, in flood,  
Pour Haco's war-song, fierce and rude.

Cunningham had not himself climbed very far up the literary ladder in 1825, although he was forty-one years of age. At one time a stonemason in a Scots village, he had entered Chantrey's studio, and was "superintendent of the works" to that eminent sculptor at the time when Borrow called upon him in London, and made an acquaintance which never seems to have extended beyond this courtesy to the younger man's *Danish Ballads*. The point of sympathy of course was that in the year 1825 Cunningham had published *The Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern*.

Five hundred copies of the *Romantic Ballads* were printed in Norwich by S. Wilkin, about two hundred being subscribed for, mainly in that city, the other three hundred being dispatched to London—to Taylor, whose name appears on the London title-page, although he seems to have passed on the book very quickly to Wightman and Cramp, for what reason we are not informed. Borrow tells us that the two hundred subscriptions of half a guinea "amply paid expenses," but he must have been cruelly disappointed, as he was doomed to be more than once in his career, by the lack of public appreciation outside of Norwich. Yet there were many reasons for this. If Scott had made the ballad popular,

## "Faustus" and "Romantic Ballads"

he had also destroyed it for a century—perhaps for ever—by substituting the novel as the favourite medium for the storyteller. Great ballads we were to have in every decade from that day to this, but never another "best seller" like *Marmion* or *The Lady of the Lake*. Our popular poets had to express themselves in other ways. Then Borrow, although his verse has been underrated by those who have not seen it at its best, or who are incompetent to appraise poetry, was not very effective here, notwithstanding that the stories in verse in *Romantic Ballads* are all entirely interesting. This fact is most in evidence in a case where a real poet, not of the greatest, has told the same story. We owe a rendering of "The Deceived Merman" to both George Borrow and Matthew Arnold, but how widely different the treatment! The story is of a merman who rose out of the water and enticed a mortal—fair Agnes or Margaret—under the waves; she becomes his wife, bears him children, and then asks to return to earth. Arriving there she refuses to go back when the merman comes disconsolately to the church-door for her. Here are a few lines from the two versions, which demonstrate that here at least Borrow was no poet and that Arnold was a very fine one:

### GEORGE BORROW

"Now, Agnes, Agnes list to me,  
Thy babes are longing so after  
thee."  
"I cannot come yet, here must I  
stay  
Until the priest shall have said his  
say."  
And when the priest had said his  
say,  
She thought with her mother at  
home she'd stay.  
"O Agnes, Agnes, list to me,  
Thy babes are sorrowing after  
thee."  
"Let them sorrow and sorrow  
their fill,  
But back to them never return I  
will."

### MATTHEW ARNOLD

We climbed on the graves, on the  
stones worn with rains,  
And we gazed up the aisles  
through the small leaded panes.  
She sat by the pillar; we saw  
her clear:  
"Margaret, hilt! come quick, we  
are here!  
Dear heart," I said, "we are long  
alone;  
The sea grows stormy, the little  
ones moan."  
But, ah, she gave me never a look,  
For her eyes were sealed on the  
holy book!  
Loud prays the priest; shut  
stands the door.  
Come away, children, call no  
more!  
Come away, come down, call no  
more!

It says much for the literary proclivities of Norwich at this period that Borrow should have had so kindly a reception

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for his book as the subscription list implies. At the end of each of Wilkin's two hundred copies a "list of subscribers" is given. It opens with the name of the Bishop of Norwich, Dr. Bathurst; it includes the equally familiar names of the Gurdons, Gurneys, Harveys, Rackhams, Hares (then as now of Stow Hall), Woodhouses—all good Norfolk or Norwich names that have come down to our time. Mayor Hawkes, who is made famous in *Lavengro* by Haydon's portrait, is there also. Among London names we find John Bowring, Borrow's new friend, and later to be counted an enemy, Thomas Campbell, Benjamin Haydon and John Timbs. But the name that most strikes the eye is that of "Thurtell." Three of the family are among the subscribers, including Mr. George Thurtell of Eaton, near Norwich, brother of the murderer; there also is the name of John Thurtell, executed for murder exactly a year before. This would seem to imply that Borrow had been a long time collecting these names and subscriptions, and doubtless before the all-too-famous crime of the previous year he had made Thurtell promise to become a subscriber, and, let us hope, had secured his half-guinea. That may account, with so sensitive and impressionable a man as our author, for the kindly place that Weare's unhappy murderer always had in his memory. Borrow, in any case, was now, for a few years, to become more than ever a vagabond. Not a single further appeal did he make to an unsympathetic literary public for a period of five years at least.

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## CHAPTER X

### "CELEBRATED TRIALS" AND JOHN THURTELL

BORROW's first book was *Faustus*, and his second was *Romantic Ballads*, the one being published, as we have seen, in 1825, the other in 1826. This chronology has the appearance of ignoring the *Celebrated Trials*, but then it is scarcely possible to count *Celebrated Trials*<sup>1</sup> as one of Borrow's books at all. It is largely a compilation, exactly as the *Newgate Calendar* and Howell's *State Trials* are compilations. In his preface to the work Borrow tells us that he has differentiated the book from the *Newgate Calendar*<sup>2</sup> and the *State Trials*<sup>3</sup> by the fact that he had made considerable compression. This was so, and in fact in many cases he has used the blue pencil rather than the pen—at least in the earlier volumes. But Borrow attempted something much more comprehensive than the *Newgate Calendar* and the *State Trials* in his book. In the former work the trials range from 1700 to 1802; in the latter from the trial of Becket in 1163 to the trial of Thistlewood in 1820. Both works are concerned solely with this country. Borrow went all over Europe, and the trials of Joan of Arc, Count Struensee, Major André, Count Cagliostro, Queen Marie Antoinette, the Duc d'Enghien, and Marshal Ney, are included in his volumes. Moreover, while what may be called state trials are numerous, including many of the cases in *Howell*, the greater number are of a domestic nature, including nearly

<sup>1</sup> *Celebrated Trials and Remarkable Cases of Criminal Jurisprudence from the Earliest Records to the Year 1825*. In six volumes. London: Printed for Geo. Knight & Lacey, Paternoster Row, 1825. Price £3 12s. in boards.

<sup>2</sup> *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar or Malefactors Recording Register*. By William Jackson. Six vols. 1802.

<sup>3</sup> Cobbett and Howell's *State Trials*. In thirty-three volumes and index, 1809 to 1828. The last volume, apart from the index, was actually published the year after Borrow's *Celebrated Trials*, that is, in 1826; but the last trial recorded was that of Thistlewood in 1820. The editors were William Cobbett, Thomas Bayly Howell, and his son, Thomas Jones Howell.

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all that are given in the *Newgate Calendar*. In the first two volumes he has naturally mainly state trials to record; the later volumes record sordid everyday crimes, and here Borrow is more at home. His style when he rewrites the trials is more vigorous, and his narrative more interesting. It is to be hoped that the exigent publisher, who he assures us made him buy the books for his compilation out of the £50 that he paid for it, was able to present him with a set of the *State Trials*, if only in one of the earlier and cheaper issues of the work than the one that now has a place in every lawyer's library.

The third volume of *Celebrated Trials*, although it opens with the trial of Algernon Sidney, is made up largely of crime of the more ordinary type, and this sordid note continues through the three final volumes. I have said that *Faustus* is an allegory of "man's inhumanity to man." That is emphatically, in more realistic form, the distinguishing feature of *Celebrated Trials*. Amid these records of savagery, it is a positive relief to come across such a trial as that of poor Joseph Barette. Barette, it will be remembered, was brought to trial because, when some roughs set upon him in the street, he drew a dagger, which he usually carried "to carve fruit and sweetmeats," and killed his assailant. In that age, when our law courts were a veritable shambles, how cheerful it is to find that the jury returned a verdict of "self-defence." But then Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, Dr. Johnson, and David Garrick gave evidence to character, representing Barette as "a man of benevolence, sobriety, modesty, and learning." This trial is an oasis of mercy in a desert of drastic punishment. Borrow carries on his "trials" to the very year before the date of publication, and the last trial in the book is that of "Henry Fauntleroy, Esquire," for forgery. Fauntleroy was a quite respectable banker of unimpeachable character, to whom had fallen at a very early age the charge of a banking business that was fundamentally unsound. It is clear that he had honestly endeavoured to put things on a better footing, that he lived simply, and had no gambling or other vices. At a crisis, however, he forged a document, in other words signed a transfer of stock which he had no right to do, the "subscribing witness" to his power of attorney being Robert Browning, a clerk in the Bank of England, and father of

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the distinguished poet. Well, Fauntleroy was sentenced to be hanged—and he was duly hanged at Newgate on 30th October, 1824, only thirteen years before Queen Victoria came to the throne!

Borrow has affirmed that from a study of the *Newgate Calendar* and the compilation of his *Celebrated Trials* he first learned to write genuine English, and it is a fact that there are some remarkably dramatic effects in these volumes, although one here withholds from Borrow the title of "author" because so much is "scissors and paste," and the purple passages are only occasional. All the same I am astonished that no one has thought it worth while to make a volume of these dramatic episodes, which are clearly the work of Borrow, and owe nothing to the innumerable pamphlets and chap-books that he brought into use. Take such an episode as that of Schening and Harlin, two young German women, one of whom pretended to have murdered her infant in the presence of the other because she madly supposed that this would secure them bread—and they were starving. The trial, the scene at the execution, the confession on the scaffold of the misguided but innocent girl, the respite, and then the execution—these make up as thrilling a narrative as is contained in the pages of fiction. Assuredly Borrow did not spare himself in that race round the bookstalls of London to find the material which the grasping Sir Richard Phillips required from him. He found, for example, Sir Herbert Croft's volume, *Love and Madness*, the supposed correspondence of Parson Hackman and Martha Reay, whom he murdered. That correspondence is now known to be an invention of Croft's. Borrow accepted it as genuine, and incorporated the whole of it in his story of the Hackman trial.

But after all, the trial which we read with greatest interest in these volumes is that of John Thurtell, because Borrow had known Thurtell in his youth, and gives us more than one glimpse of him in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*.

Rarely in our criminal jurisprudence has a murder trial excited more interest than that of John Thurtell for the murder of Weare—the Gill's Hill Murder, as it was called. Certainly no murder of modern times has had so many indirect literary associations. Borrow, Carlyle, Hazlitt, Walter Scott, and Thackeray are among those who have given it

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lasting fame by comment of one kind or another; and the lines ascribed to Theodore Hook are perhaps as well known as any other memory of the tragedy:

They cut his throat from ear to ear,  
His brain they battered in,  
His name was Mr. William Weare,  
He dwelt in Lyon's Inn.

Carlyle's division of human beings of the upper classes into "noblemen, gentlemen, and gismen," which occurs in his essay on Richter, and a later reference to gismanhood which occurs in his essay on Goethe's Works, had their inspiration in an episode in the trial of Thurtell, when the question being asked, "What sort of a person was Mr. Weare?" brought the answer, "He was always a respectable person." "What do you mean by respectable?" the witness was asked. "He kept a gig," was the reply, which brought the word "gigmanity" into our language.<sup>1</sup>

I have said that John Thurtell and two members of his family became subscribers for Borrow's *Romantic Ballads*, and it is certain that Borrow must often have met Thurtell, that is to say looked at him from a distance, in some of the scenes of prize-fighting which both affected, Borrow merely as a youthful spectator, Thurtell as a reckless backer of one or other combatant. Thurtell's father was an alderman of Norwich living in a good house on the Ipswich Road when the son's name rang through England as that of a murderer. The father was born in 1765 and died in 1846. Four years after his son John was hanged he was elected Mayor of Norwich, in recognition of his violent ultra-Whig or blue and white political opinions. He had been nominated as mayor both in 1818 and 1820, but it was perhaps the extraordinary "advertisement" of his son's shameful death that gave the citizens of Norwich the necessary enthusiasm to elect Alderman Thurtell as mayor in 1828. It was in those oligarchical days a not unnatural fashion to be against the Government. The feast at the Guildhall on this occasion was attended by four hundred and sixty guests. A year before John Thurtell was hanged, in 1823, his father moved a violent political resolution in

<sup>1</sup> Another witness attained fame by her answer to the inquiry, "Was supper postponed?" with the reply, "No, it was pork."

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Norwich, but was out-Heroded by Cobbett, who moved a much more extreme one over his head and carried it by an immense majority. It was a brutal time, and there cannot be a doubt that Alderman Thurtell, while busy setting the world straight, failed to bring up his family very well. John, as we shall see, was hanged; Thomas, another brother, was associated with him in many disgraceful transactions; while a third brother, George, also a subscriber, by the way, to Borrow's *Romantic Ballads*, who was a landscape gardener at Eaton, died in prison in 1848 under sentence for theft. Apart from a rather riotous and bad bringing up, which may be pleaded in extenuation, it is not possible to waste much sympathy over John Thurtell. He had thoroughly disgraced himself in Norwich before he removed to London. There he got further and further into difficulties, and one of the many publications which arose out of his trial and execution was devoted to pointing the moral of the evils of gambling. It was bad luck at cards, and the loss of much money to William Weare, who seems to have been an exceedingly vile person, that led to the murder. Thurtell had a friend named Probert who lived in a quiet cottage in a byway of Hertfordshire—Gill's Hill, near Elstree. He suggested to Weare in a friendly way that they should go for a day's shooting at Gill's Hill, and that Probert would put them up for the night. Weare went home, collected a few things in a bag, and took a hackney coach to a given spot, where Thurtell met him with a gig. The two men drove out of London together. The date was 24th October, 1833. On the high-road they met and passed Probert and a companion named Joseph Hunt, who had even been instructed by Thurtell to bring a sack with him—this was usually used to carry away the body—and must therefore have been privy to the intended murder. By the time the second gig containing Probert and Hunt arrived near Probert's cottage, Thurtell met it in the roadway, according to their accounts, and told the two men that he had done the deed; that he had killed Weare first by ineffectively shooting him, then by dashing out his brains with his pistol, and finally by cutting his throat. Thurtell further told his friends, if their evidence was to be trusted, that he had left the body behind a hedge. In the night the three men placed the body in a sack and carried it to a pond near

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Probert's house and threw it in. The next night they fished it out and threw it into another pond some distance away. Thurtell meanwhile had divided the spoil—some £20, which he said was all that he had obtained from Weare's body—with his companions. Hunt, it may be mentioned, afterwards declared his conviction that Thurtell, when he first committed the murder, had removed his victim's principal treasure, notes to the value of three or four hundred pounds. Suspicion was aroused, and the hue and cry raised through the finding by a labourer of the pistol in the hedge, and the discovery of a pool of blood on the roadway. Probert promptly turned informer; Hunt also tried to save himself by a rambling confession, and it was he who revealed where the body was concealed, accompanying the officers to the pond and pointing out the exact spot where the corpse would be found. When recovered the body was taken to the Artichoke inn at Elstree, and here the coroner's inquest was held. Meanwhile Thurtell had been arrested in London and taken down to Elstree to be present at the inquest. A verdict of murder against all three miscreants was given by the coroner's jury, and Weare's body was buried in Elstree Churchyard.

In January, 1824, John Thurtell was brought to trial at Hertford Assizes, and Hunt also. But first of all there were some interesting proceedings in the Court of King's Bench, before the Chief Justice and two other judges, complaining that Thurtell had not been allowed to see his counsel. And there were other points at issue. Thurtell's counsel moved for a criminal injunction against the proprietor of the Surrey Theatre in that a performance had been held there, and was being held, which assumed Thurtell's guilt, the identical horse and gig being exhibited in which Weare was supposed to have ridden to the scene of his death. Finally this was arranged, and a *mandamus* was granted "commanding the admission of legal advisers to the prisoner." At last the trial came on at Hertford before Mr. Justice Park. It lasted two days, although the judge wished to go on all night in order to finish in one. But the protest of Thurtell, supported by the jury, led to an adjournment. Probert had been set free and appeared as a witness. The jury gave a verdict of guilty, and Thurtell and Hunt were sentenced to be hanged, but Hunt escaped with trans-

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portation. Thurtell made his own speech for the defence, which had a great effect upon the jury, until the judge swept most of its sophistries away. It was, however, a very able performance. Thurtell's line of defence was to declare that Hunt and Probert were the murderers, and that he was a victim of their perjuries. If hanged, he would be hanged on circumstantial evidence only, and he gave, with great elaboration, the details of a number of cases where men had been wrongfully hanged upon circumstantial evidence. His lawyers had apparently provided him with books containing these examples from the past, and his month in prison was devoted to this defence, which showed great ability. The trial took place on 6th January, 1824, and Thurtell was hanged on the 9th, in front of Hertford Gaol: his body was given to the Anatomical Museum in London. A contemporary report says that Thurtell, on the scaffold,

fixed his eyes on a young gentleman in the crowd, whom he had frequently seen as a spectator at the commencement of the proceedings against him. Seeing that the individual was affected by the circumstances, he removed them to another quarter, and in so doing recognised an individual well known in the sporting circles, to whom he made a slight bow.

The reader of *Lavengro* might speculate whether that "young gentleman" was Borrow, but Borrow was in Norwich in January, 1824, his father dying in the following month. In his *Celebrated Trials* Borrow tells the story of the execution with wonderful vividness, and supplies effective quotations from "an eyewitness." Borrow no doubt exaggerated his acquaintance with Thurtell, as in his *Robinson Crusoe* romance he was fully entitled to do for effect. He was too young at the time to have been much noticed by a man so much his senior. The writer who accepts Borrow's own statement that he really gave him "some lessons in the noble art" is too credulous, and the statement that Thurtell's house "on the Ipswich Road was a favourite rendezvous for the Fancy" is unsupported by evidence. Old Alderman Thurtell owned the house in question, and we find no evidence that he encouraged his son's predilection for prize-fighting.

## CHAPTER XI

### BORROW AND THE FANCY

GEORGE BORROW had no sympathy with Thurtell the gambler. I find no evidence in his career of any taste for games of hazard or indeed for games of any kind, although we recall that as a mere child he was able to barter a pack of cards for the Irish language. But he had certainly very considerable sympathy with the notorious criminal as a friend and patron of prize-fighting. This now discredited pastime Borrow ever counted a virtue. Was not his God-fearing father a champion in his way, or, at least, had he not in open fight beaten the champion of the moment, Big Ben Brain? Moreover, who was there in those days with blood in his veins who did not count the cultivation of the Fancy as the noblest and most manly of pursuits! Why, William Hazlitt, a prince among English essayists, whose writings are a beloved classic in our day, wrote in *The New Monthly Magazine* in these very years his own eloquent impression, and even introduces John Thurtell more than once as "Tom Turtle," little thinking then of the fate that was so soon to overtake him. What could be more lyrical than this:

Reader, have you ever seen a fight? If not, you have a pleasure to come, at least if it is a fight like that between the Gas-man and Bill Neate.

And then the best historian of prize-fighting, Henry Downes Miles, the author of *Pugilistica*, has his own statement of the case. You will find it in his monograph on John Jackson, the pugilist who taught Lord Byron to box, and received the immortality of an eulogistic footnote in *Don Juan*. Here is Miles's defence:

No small portion of the public has taken it for granted that pugilism and blackguardism are synonymous. It is as an antidote to these slanderers that we pen a candid history of the boxers; and taking the general habits of men of humble origin (elevated by their courage and bodily gifts to be the associates of those more fortunate in worldly position), we fearlessly maintain that

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the best of our boxers present as good samples of honesty, generosity of spirit, goodness of heart and humanity, as an equal number of men of any class of society.

From Samuel Johnson onwards literary England has had a kindness for the pugilist, although the magistrate has long, and rightly, ruled him out as impossible. Borrow carried his enthusiasm further than any, and no account of him that concentrates attention upon his accomplishment as a distributor of Bibles and ignores his delight in fisticuffs, has any grasp of the real George Borrow. Indeed it may be said, and will be shown in the course of our story, that Borrow entered upon Bible distribution in the spirit of a pugilist rather than that of an evangelist. But to return to Borrow's pugilistic experiences. He claims, as we have seen, occasionally to have put on the gloves with John Thurtell. He describes vividly enough his own conflicts with the Flaming Tinman and with Petulengro. His one heroine, Isopel Berners, had "Fair Play and Long Melford" as her ideal, "Long Melford" being the good right-handed blow with which Lavengro conquered the Tinman. Isopel, we remember, had learned in Long Melford Union to "Fear God and take your own part!"

George Borrow, indeed, was at home with the whole army of prize-fighters, who came down to us like the Roman Caesars or the Kings of England in a noteworthy procession, their dynasty commencing with James Fig of Thame, who began to reign in 1719, and closing with Tom King, who beat Heenan in 1863, or with Jem Mace, who flourished in a measure until 1872. With what zest must Borrow have followed the account of the greatest battle of all, that between Heenan and Tom Sayers at Farnborough in 1860, when it was said that Parliament had been emptied to patronise a prize-fight; and this although Heenan complained that he had been chased out of eight counties. For by this time, in spite of lordly patronage, pugilism was doomed, and the more harmless boxing had taken its place. "Pity that corruption should have crept in amongst them," sighed Lavengro in a memorable passage, in which he also has his paean of praise for the bruisers of England:

Let no one sneer at the bruisers of England—what were the gladiators of Rome, or the bull-fighters of Spain, in its palmiest days, compared to England's bruisers?

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Yes: Borrow was never hard on the bruisers of England, and followed their achievements, it may be said, from his cradle to his grave. His beloved father had brought him up, so to speak, upon memories of one who was champion before George was born—Big Ben Brain of Bristol. Brain, although always called "Big Ben," was only 5 feet 10 in. high. He was for years a coal porter at a wharf off the Strand. It was in 1791 that Ben Brain won the championship which placed him upon a pinnacle in the minds of all robust people. The Duke of Hamilton once backed him against the then champion, Tom Johnson, for five hundred guineas. "Public expectation," says *The Oracle*, a contemporary newspaper, "never was raised so high by any pugilistic contest; great bets were laid, and it is estimated £20,000 was wagered on this occasion." Ben Brain was the undisputed conqueror, we are told, in eighteen rounds, occupying no more than twenty-one minutes. Brain died in 1794, and all the biographers tell of the piety of his end, so that Borrow's father may have read the Bible to him in his last moments, as Borrow avers, but I very much doubt the accuracy of the following:

Honour to Brain, who four months after the event which I have now narrated was champion of England, having conquered the heroic Johnson. Honour to Brain, who, at the end of other four months, worn out by the dreadful blows which he had received in his manly combats, expired in the arms of my father, who read the Bible to him in his latter moments—Big Ben Brain.

Brain actually lived for four years after his fight with Johnson, but perhaps the fight in Hyde Park between Borrow's father and Ben, as narrated in *Lavengro*, is all romancing. It makes good reading in any case, as does Borrow's eulogy of some of his own contemporaries of the prize-ring.

It is all very accurate history. We know that there really was this wonderful gathering of the bruisers of England assembled in the neighbourhood of Norwich in July, 1820, that is to say, sixteen miles away at North Walsham. More than 25,000 men, it is estimated, gathered to see Edward Painter of Norwich fight Tom Oliver of London for a purse of a hundred guineas. There were three Belchers, heroes of the prize-ring, but Borrow here refers to Tom, whose younger brother, Jem, had died in 1811 at the age of thirty. Tom

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Belcher died in 1854 at the age of seventy-one. Thomas Cribb was champion of England from 1805 to 1820. One of Cribb's greatest fights was with Jem Belcher in 1807, when, in the forty-first and last round, as we are told by the chroniclers, "Cribb proving the stronger man put in two weak blows, when Belcher, quite exhausted, fell upon the ropes and gave up the combat." Cribb had a prolonged career of glory, but he died in poverty in 1848. Happier was an earlier champion, John Gully, who held the glorious honour for three years—from 1805 to 1808. Gully turned tavern-keeper, and making a fortune out of sundry speculations, entered Parliament as member for Pontefract, and lived to be eighty years of age.

It is necessary to dwell upon Borrow as the friend of prize-fighters, because no one understands Borrow who does not realise that his real interests were not in literature but in action. He would have liked to join the army but could not obtain a commission. And so he had to be content with such fighting as was possible. He cared more for the men who could use their fists than for those who could but wield the pen. He would, we may be sure, have rejoiced to know that many more have visited the tomb of Tom Sayers in Highgate Cemetery than have visited the tomb of George Eliot in the same burial-ground. A curious moral obliquity this, you may say. But to recognise it is to understand one side of Borrow, and an interesting side withal.

## CHAPTER XII

### EIGHT YEARS OF VAGABONDAGE

THERE has been much nonsense written concerning what has been called the "veiled period" of George Borrow's life. This has arisen from a letter which Richard Ford of the *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* wrote to Borrow after a visit to him at Oulton in 1844. Borrow was full of his projected *Lavengro*, the idea of which he outlined to his friends. He was a genial man in those days, on the wave of a popular success. Was not *The Bible in Spain* passing merrily from edition to edition! Borrow, it is clear, told Ford that he was writing his "Autobiography"—he had no misgiving then as to what he should call it—and he evidently proposed to end it in 1825 and not in 1833, when the Bible Society gave him his real chance in life. His friend Ford indeed begged him not to "drop a curtain" over the eight years succeeding 1825. "No doubt," says Ford, "it will excite a mysterious interest," but then he adds in effect it will lead to a wrong construction being put upon the omission. Well, there can be but one interpretation, and that not an unnatural one. Borrow had a very rough time during these years. His vanity was hurt, and no wonder. It seems a strange matter to us now that Charles Dickens should have been ashamed of the blacking-bottle episode of his boyhood. Genius has a right to a poverty-stricken—even to a sordid, boyhood. But genius has no right to a sordid manhood, and here was George "Olaus" Borrow, who was able to claim the friendship of William Taylor, the German scholar; who was able to boast of his association with sound scholastic foundations, with the High School at Edinburgh and the Grammar School at Norwich; who was a great linguist and had made rare translations from the poetry of many nations, starving in the byways of England and of France. What a fate for such a man that he should have been so unhappy for eight years; should have led the most penurious of

## Eight Years of Vagabondage

roving lives, and almost certainly have been in prison as a common tramp.<sup>1</sup> It was all very well to romance about a poverty-stricken youth. But when youth had fled there ceased to be romance, and only sordidness was forthcoming. From his twenty-third to his thirty-first year George Borrow was engaged in a hopeless quest for the means of making a living. There is, however, very little mystery. Many incidents of each of these years are revealed at one or other point. His home, to which he returned from time to time, was with his mother at the cottage in Willow Lane, Norwich. Whether he made sufficient profit out of a horse, as in *The Romany Rye*, to enable him to travel upon the proceeds, as Dr. Knapp thinks, we cannot say. Dr. Knapp is doubtless right in assuming that during this period he led "a life of roving adventure," his own authorised version of his career at the time, as we may learn from the biography in his handwriting from *Men of the Time*. But how far this roving was confined to England, how far it extended to other lands, we do not know. We are, however, satisfied that he starved through it all, that he rarely had a penny in his pocket. At a later date he gave it to be understood at times that he had visited the East, and that India had revealed her glories to him. We do not believe it. Defoe was Borrow's master in literature, and he shared Defoe's right to lie magnificently on occasion. Borrow certainly did some travel in these years, but it was sordid, lacking in all dignity—never afterwards to be recalled. For the most part, however, he was in England. We know that Borrow was in Norwich in 1826, for we have seen him superintending the publication of the *Romantic Ballads* by subscription in that year. In that year also he wrote the letter to Haydon, the painter, to say that he was ready to sit for him, but that he was "going to the south of France in a little better than a fortnight." We know also that he was in Norwich in 1827, because it was then, and not in 1818 as described in *Lavengro*, that he "doffed his hat" to the famous trotting stallion Marshland Shales, when that famous old horse was exhibited at Tombland Fair on the Castle Hill. We meet him next as the friend of Dr. Bowring. The letters to Bowring we must leave to another chapter, but they commence in 1829

<sup>1</sup> Only thus can we explain Borrow's later declaration that he had four times been in prison.

## The Life of George Borrow

and continue through 1830 and 1831. Through them all Borrow shows himself alive to the necessity of obtaining an appointment of some kind, and meanwhile he is hard at work upon his translations from various languages, which, in conjunction with Dr. Bowring, he is to issue as *Songs of Scandinavia*. It has been said that in 1829 he made the translation of the *Memoirs of Vidocq*, which appeared in that year with a short preface by the translator.<sup>1</sup> But these little volumes bear no internal evidence of Borrow's style, and there is no external evidence to support the assumption that he had a hand in their publication. His occasional references to Vidocq are probably due to the fact that he had read this little book.

I have before me one very lengthy manuscript of Borrow's of this period. It is dated December, 1829, and is addressed, "To the Committee of the Honourable and Praiseworthy Association, known by the name of the Highland Society."<sup>2</sup> It is a proposal that they should publish in two thick octavo volumes a series of translations of the best and most approved poetry of the ancient and modern Scots-Gaelic bards. Borrow was willing to give two years to the project, for which he pleads "with no sordid motive." It is a dignified letter, which will be found in one of Dr. Knapp's appendices—so presumably Borrow made two copies of it. The offer was in any case declined, and so Borrow passed from disappointment to disappointment during these eight years, which no wonder he desired, in the coming years of fame and prosperity, to veil as much as possible. The lean years in the lives of any of us are not those upon which we delight to dwell, or upon which we most cheerfully look back.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Vidocq, Principal Agent of the French Police until 1827, and now proprietor of the paper manufactory at St. Mandé*. Written by himself. Translated from the French. In Four Volumes. London: Whittaker, Treacher and Arnot, Ave Maria Lane, 1829.

<sup>2</sup> This with other documents I have presented to the Borrow Museum, Norwich.

<sup>3</sup> In 1830 Borrow had another disappointment. He translated *The Sleeping Bard* from the Welsh. This also failed to find a publisher. It was issued in 1860, under which date we discuss it.

## CHAPTER XIII

SIR JOHN BOWRING

"Poor George. . . . I wish he were making money. He works hard and remains poor"—thus wrote John Borrow to his mother in 1830 from Mexico, and it disposes in a measure of any suggestion of mystery with regard to five of those years that he wished to veil. They were not spent, it is clear, in rambling in the East, as he tried to persuade Colonel Napier many years later. They were spent for the most part in diligent attempt at the capture of words, in reading the poetry and the prose of many lands, and in making translations of unequal merit from these diverse tongues. This is indisputably brought home to me by the manuscripts in my possession. These manuscripts represent years of work. Borrow has been counted a considerable linguist, and he had assuredly a reading and speaking acquaintance with a great many languages. But this knowledge was acquired, as all knowledge is, with infinite trouble and patience. I have before me hundreds of small sheets of paper upon which are written English words and their equivalents in some twenty or thirty languages. These serve to show that Borrow learnt a language as a small boy in an old-fashioned system of education learns his Latin or French—by writing down simple words—"father," "mother," "horse," "dog," and so on with the same word in Latin or French in front of them. Of course Borrow had a superb memory and abundant enthusiasm, and so was enabled to add one language to another and to make his translations from such books as he could obtain with varied success. I believe that nearly all the books that he handled came from the Norwich library, and when Mrs. Borrow wrote to her elder son to say that George was working hard, as we may fairly assume, from the reply quoted, that she did, she was recalling this laborious work at translation that must have gone on for years. We have seen

## The Life of George Borrow

the first fruit in the translation from the German—or possibly from the French—of Klinger's *Faustus*; we have seen it in *Romantic Ballads* from the Danish, the Irish, and the Swedish. Now there really seemed a chance of a more prosperous utilisation of his gift, for Borrow had found a zealous friend who was prepared to go forward with him in his work of giving to the English public translations from the literatures of the northern nations. This friend was Dr. John Bowring, who made a very substantial reputation in his day.

Bowring has told his own story in a volume of *Autobiographical Recollections*, a singularly dull book for a man whose career was at once so varied and so full of interest. He was born at Exeter in 1792 of an old Devonshire family, and entered a merchant's office in his native city on leaving school. He early acquired a taste for the study of languages, and learnt French from a refugee priest precisely in the way in which Borrow had done. He also acquired Italian, Spanish, German and Dutch, continuing with a great variety of other languages. Indeed, only the very year after Borrow had published *Faustus*, he published his *Ancient Poetry and Romances of Spain*, and the year after Borrow's *Romantic Ballads* came Bowring's *Servian Popular Poetry*. With such interest in common it was natural that the two men should be brought together, but Bowring had the qualities which enabled him to make a career for himself, and Borrow had not. In 1811, as a clerk in a London mercantile house, he was sent to Spain, and after this his travels were varied. He was in Russia in 1820, and in 1822 was arrested at Calais and thrown into prison, being suspected by the Bourbon Government of abetting the French Liberals. Canning as Foreign Minister took up his cause, and he was speedily released. He assisted Jeremy Bentham in founding *The Westminster Review* in 1824. Meanwhile he was seeking official employment, and in conjunction with Mr. Villiers, afterwards Earl of Clarendon, and that ambassador to Spain who befriended Borrow when he was in the Peninsula, became a commissioner to investigate the commercial relations between England and France. After the Reform Bill of 1832 Bowring was frequently a candidate for Parliament, and was finally elected for Bolton in 1841. In the meantime he assisted Cobden in the formation of the Anti-Corn Law League in 1838. Having suffered great monetary losses in

## Sir John Bowring

the interval he applied for the appointment of Consul at Canton, of which place he afterwards became Governor, being knighted in 1854. At one period of his career at Hong Kong his conduct was made the subject of a vote of censure in Parliament, Lord Palmerston, however, warmly defending him. Finally returning to England in 1862, he continued his literary work with unflinching zest. He died at Exeter, in a house very near that in which he was born, in 1872. His extraordinary energies cannot be too much praised, and there is no doubt but that in addition to being the possessor of great learning he was a man of high character. His literary efforts were surprisingly varied. There are at least thirty-six volumes with his name on the title-page, most of them unreadable to-day; even such works, for example, as his *Visit to the Philippine Isles and Siam and the Siamese*, which involved travel into then little-known lands. Perhaps the only book by him that to-day commands attention is his translation of Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl*. The most readable of many books by him into which I have dipped is his *Servian Popular Poetry* of 1827, in which we find interesting stories in verse that remind us of similar stories from the Danish in Borrow's *Romantic Ballads* published only the year before. The extraordinary thing, indeed, is the many points of likeness between Borrow and Bowring. Both were remarkable linguists; both had spent some time in Spain and Russia; both had found themselves in foreign prisons. They were alike associated in some measure with Norwich—Bowring through friendship with Taylor—and I might go on to many other points of likeness or of contrast. It is natural, therefore, that the penniless Borrow should have welcomed acquaintance with the more prosperous scholar. Thus it is that, some thirty years later, Borrow described the introduction by Taylor:

The writer had just entered into his eighteenth year, when he met at the table of a certain Anglo-Germanist an individual, apparently somewhat under thirty, of middle stature, a thin and weaselly figure, a sallow complexion, a certain obliquity of vision, and a large pair of spectacles. This person, who had lately come from abroad, and had published a volume of translations, had attracted some slight notice in the literary world, and was looked upon as a kind of lion in a small provincial capital. After dinner he argued a great deal, spoke vehemently against the Church and entered the most desperate Radicalism that was perhaps ever

# The Life of George Borrow

heard, saying, he hoped that in a short time there would not be a king or queen in Europe, and inveighing bitterly against the English aristocracy, and against the Duke of Wellington in particular, whom he said, if he himself was ever president of an English republic—an event which he seemed to think by no means improbable—he would hang for certain infamous acts of profligacy and bloodshed which he had perpetrated in Spain. Being informed that the writer was something of a philologist, to which character the individual in question laid great pretensions, he came and sat down by him, and talked about languages and literature. The writer, who was only a boy, was a little frightened at first.

The quarrels of authors are frequently amusing but rarely edifying, and this hatred of Bowring that possessed the soul of poor Borrow in his later years is of the same texture as the rest. We shall never know the facts, but the position is comprehensible enough. Let us turn to the extant correspondence which, as far as we know, opened when Borrow paid what was probably his third visit to London in 1829:

## TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

17 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, BLOOMSBURY. [Dec. 6, 1829.]

MY DEAR SIR,—Lest I should intrude upon you when you are busy, I write to enquire when you will be unoccupied. I wish to shew you my translation of *The Death of Balder*, Ewald's most celebrated production, which, if you approve of, you will perhaps render me some assistance in bringing forth, for I don't know many publishers. I think this will be a proper time to introduce it to the British public, as your account of Danish literature will doubtless cause a sensation. My friend Mr. R. Taylor has my *Kampe Viser*, which he has read and approves of; but he is so very deeply occupied, that I am apprehensive he neglects them: but I am unwilling to take them out of his hands, lest I offend him. Your letting me know when I may call will greatly oblige,  
—Dear Sir, your most obedient servant, GEORGE BORROW.

## TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

17 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, BLOOMSBURY. [Dec. 28, 1829.]

MY DEAR SIR,—I trouble you with these lines for the purpose of submitting a little project of mine for your approbation. When I had last the pleasure of being at yours, you mentioned, that we might at some future period unite our strength in composing a kind of Danish Anthology. You know, as well as I, that by far the most remarkable portion of Danish poetry is comprised in those ancient popular productions termed *Kampe*

## Sir John Bowring

*Viser*, which I have translated. Suppose we bring forward at once the first volume of the Danish Anthology, which should contain the heroic and supernatural songs of the *K. V.*, which are certainly the most interesting; they are quite ready for the press with the necessary notes, and with an introduction which I am not ashamed of. The second volume might consist of the Historic songs and the ballads and Romances, this and the third volume, which should consist of the modern Danish poetry, and should commence with the celebrated "Ode to the Birds" by Morten Borup, might appear in company at the beginning of next season. To Olenlager should be allotted the principal part of the fourth volume; and it is my opinion that amongst his minor pieces should be given a good translation of his *Aladdin*, by which alone he has rendered his claim to the title of a great poet indubitable. A proper Danish Anthology cannot be contained in less than 4 volumes, the literature being so copious. The first volume, as I said before, might appear instantler, with no further trouble to yourself than writing. If you should think fit, a page or two of introductory matter.—Yours most truly, my dear Sir,

GEORGE BORROW.

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

17 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, Decr. 31, 1829.

MY DEAR SIR,—I received your note, and as it appears that you will not be disengaged till next Friday evening (this day week) I will call then. You think that no more than two volumes can be ventured on. Well! be it so! The first volume can contain 70 choice *Kampe Viser*; viz. all the heroic, all the supernatural ballads (which two classes are by far the most interesting), and a few of the historic and romantic songs. The sooner the work is advertised the better, for I am terribly afraid of being forestalled in the *Kampe Viser* by some of those Scotch blackguards who affect to translate from all languages, of which they are fully as ignorant as Lockhart is of Spanish. I am quite ready with the first volume, which might appear by the middle of February (the best time in the whole season), and if we unite our strength in the second, I think we can produce something worthy of fame, for we shall have plenty of matter to employ talent upon.—Most truly yours,

GEORGE BORROW.

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

17 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, BLOOMSBURY, Jan'y. 7, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,—I send the prospectus for your inspection and for the correction of your master hand. I have endeavoured to assume a Danish style, I know not whether I have been successful. Alter, I pray you, whatever false logic has crept into it, find a remedy for its incoherencies, and render it fit for its intended

# The Life of George Borrow

purpose. I have had for the two last days a rising headache which has almost prevented me doing anything. I sat down this morning and translated a hundred lines of the *May-day*; it is a fine piece.—Yours most truly, my dear Sir,

GEORGE BORROW.

## TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

17 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, BLOOMSBURY, *Jany.* 14, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,—I approve of the prospectus in every respect; it is business-like, and there is nothing flashy in it. I do not wish to suggest one alteration. I am not idle: I translated yesterday from your volume longish *Kämpfe Visers*, among which is the "Death of King Hacon at Kirkwall in Orkney," after his unsuccessful invasion of Scotland. To-day I translated "The Duke's Daughter of Skage," a noble ballad of 400 lines. When I call again I will, with your permission, retake Tullin and attack *The Surveyor*. Allow me, my dear Sir, to direct your attention to Öleneschläger's *St. Hems Aftenspil*, which is the last in his Digte of 1803. It contains his best lyrics, one or two of which I have translated. It might, I think, be contained within 70 pages, and I could translate it in 3 weeks. Were we to give the whole of it we should gratify Öleneschläger's wish expressed to you, that one of his larger pieces should appear. But it is for you to decide entirely on what *is* or what *is not* to be done. When you see the *foreign* editor I should feel much obliged if you would speak to him about my reviewing Tegner, and enquire whether a good article on Welsh poetry would be received. I have the advantage of not being a Welsh-man. I would speak the truth, and would give translations of some of the best Welsh poetry; and I really believe that my translations would not be the worst that have been made from the Welsh tongue.—Most truly yours,

G. BORROW.

## TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM STREET, *Jany.*, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,—I write this to inform you that I am at No. 7 Museum St., Bloomsbury. I have been obliged to decamp from Russell St. for the cogent reason of an execution having been sent into the house, and I thought myself happy in escaping with my things. I have got half of the Manuscript from Mr. Richard Taylor, but many of the pages must be rewritten owing to their being torn, etc. He is printing the prospectus, but a proof has not yet been struck off. Send me some as soon as you get them. I will send one with a letter to H. G.—Yours eternally,

G. BORROW.

# Sir John Bowring

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM STREET, *Jan'y. 25, 1830.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I find that you called at mine, I am sorry that I was not at home. I have been to Richard Taylor, and you will have the prospectuses this afternoon. I have translated Ferros's "Worthiness of Virtue" for you, and the two other pieces I shall translate this evening, and you shall have them all when I come on Wednesday evening. If I can at all assist you in anything, pray let me know, and I shall be proud to do it.—Yours most truly,

G. BORROW.

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM STREET, *Feb'y. 20, 1830.*

MY DEAR SIR,—To my great pleasure I perceive that the books have all arrived safe. But I find that, instead of an Icelandic Grammar, you have lent me an *Essay on the origin of the Icelandic Language*, which I here return. Thoriakson's Grave-ode is superlatively fine, and I translated it this morning, as I breakfasted. I have just finished a translation of Baggesen's beautiful poem, and I send it for your inspection.—Most sincerely yours,

GEORGE BORROW.

P.S.—When I come we will make the modifications of this piece, if you think any are requisite, for I have various readings in my mind for every stanza. I wish you a very pleasant journey to Cambridge, and hope you will procure some names amongst the literati.

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM STREET, *March 9, 1830.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have thought over the Museum matter which we were talking about last night, and it appears to me that it would be the very thing for me, provided that it could be accomplished. I should feel obliged if you would deliberate upon the best mode of proceeding, so that when I see you again I may have the benefit of your advice.—Yours most sincerely,

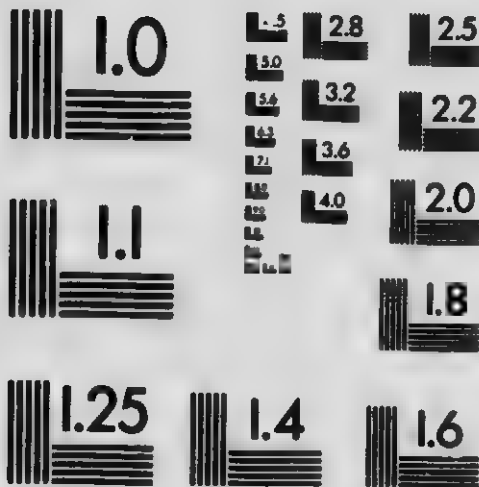
GEORGE BORROW.

To this letter Bowring replied the same day. He promised to help in the Museum project "by every sort of counsel and creation." "I should rejoice to see you *nicked* in the British Museum," he concludes.



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# The Life of George Borrow

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM STREET, Friday Evening, May 21, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,—I shall be happy to accept your invitation to meet Mr. Grundtvig to-morrow morning. As at present no doubt seems to be entertained of Prince Leopold's accepting the sovereignty of Greece, would you have any objection to write to him concerning me? I should be very happy to go to Greece in his service. I do not wish to go in a civil or domestic capacity, and I have, moreover, no doubt that all such situations have been long since filled up; I wish to go in a military one, for which I am qualified by birth and early habits. You might inform the Prince that I have been for years on the Commander-in-Chief's List for a commission, but that I have not had sufficient interest to procure an appointment. One of my reasons for wishing to reside in Greece is, that the mines of Eastern Literature would be acceptable to me. I should soon become an adept in Turkish, and would weave and transmit to you such an anthology as would gladden your very heart. As for *The Songs of Scandinavia*, all the ballads would be ready before departure, and as I should take books, I would in a few months send you translations of the modern lyric poetry. I hope this letter will not displease you. I do not write it from *flightiness*, but from thoughtfulness. I am uneasy to find myself at four and twenty drifting on the sea of the world, and likely to continue so.—Yours most sincerely,  
G. BORROW.

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM ST., June 1, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,—I send you *Hafbur and Signs* to deposit in the Scandinavian Treasury, and I should feel obliged by your doing the following things.

1. Hunting up and lending me your Anglo-Saxon Dictionary as soon as possible, for Grundtvig wishes me to assist him in the translation of some Anglo-Saxon Proverbs.
2. When you write to Finn Magnussen to thank him for his attention, pray request him to send the *Færoisha Quida*, or popular songs of Ferroe, and also *Broder Run's Historie*, or the *History of Friar Rush*, the book which Thiele mentions in his *Folhesagn*.—Yours most sincerely,  
G. BORROW.

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM STREET, June 7, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have looked over Mr. Grundtvig's manuscripts. It is a very long affair, and the language is Norman-Saxon. £40 would not be an extravagant price for a transcript, and so

## Sir John Bowring

they told him at the museum. However, as I am doing nothing particular at present, and as I might learn something from transcribing it, I would do it for £20. He will call on you to-morrow morning, and then if you please you may recommend me. The character closely resembles the ancient Irish, so I think you can answer for my competency.—Yours most truly,

G. BORROW.

P.S.—Do not lose the original copies of the Danish translations which you sent to the *Foreign Quarterly*, for I have no duplicates. I think *The Roses* of Ingemann was sent; it is not printed; so if it be not returned, we shall have to re-translate it.

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

7 MUSEUM ST., Sept. 14, 1830.

MY DEAR SIR,—I return you the Bohemian books. I am going to Norwich for some short time as I am very unwell, and hope that cold bathing in October and November may prove of service to me. My complaints are, I believe, the offspring of ennui and unsettled prospects. I have thoughts of attempting to get into the French service, as I should like prodigiously to serve under Clausel in the next Bedouin campaign. I shall leave London next Sunday and will call some evening to take my leave; I cannot come in the morning, as early rising kills me.—Most sincerely yours,

G. BORROW.

Borrow's next letter to Bowring that has been preserved is dated 1835 and was written from Portugal. With that I will deal when we come to Borrow's travels in the Peninsula. Here it sufficeth to note that during the years of Borrow's most urgent need he seems to have found a kind friend if not a very zealous helper in the "Old Radical" whom he came to hate so cordially.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BORROW AND THE BIBLE SOCIETY

THAT George Borrow should have become an agent for the Bible Society, then in the third decade of its flourishing career, has naturally excited doubts as to his moral honesty. The position was truly a contrast to an earlier ideal contained in the letter to his Norwich friend, Roger Kerrison, that we have already given, in which, with all the zest of a Shelley, he declares that he intends to live in London, "write plays, poetry, etc., abuse religion, and get myself prosecuted." But that was in 1824, and Borrow had suffered great tribulation in the intervening eight years. He had acquired many languages, wandered far and written much, all too little of which had found a publisher. There was plenty of time for his religious outlook to have changed in the interval, and in any case Borrow was no theologian. The negative outlook of "Godless Billy Taylor," and the positive outlook of certain Evangelical friends with whom he was now on visiting terms, were of small account compared with the imperative need of making a living—and then there was the passionate longing of his nature for a wider sphere—for travelling activity which should not be dependent alone upon the vagabond's crust. What matter if, as Harriet Martineau—most generous and also most malicious of women, with much kinship with Borrow in temperament—said, that his appearance before the public as a devout agent of the Bible Society excited a "burst of laughter from all who remembered the old Norwich days"; what matter if another "scribbling woman," as Carlyle called such strident female writers as were in vogue in mid-Victorian days—Frances Power Cobbe—thought him "insincere"; these were unable to comprehend the abnormal heart of Borrow, so entirely at one with Goethe in *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre*:

# Borrow and the Bible Society

Bleibe nicht am Boden heften,  
Frisch gewagt und frisch hinaus!  
Kopf und Arm, mit heitern Kräften,  
Ueberall sind sie zu Haus;  
Wo wir uns der Sonne freuen,  
Sind wir jede Sorge los;  
Dass wir uns in ihr zerstreuen,  
Darum ist die Welt so gross.<sup>1</sup>

Here was Borrow's opportunity indeed. Verily I believe that it would have been the same had it been a society for the propagation of the writings of Defoe among the Persians. With what zest would Borrow have undertaken to translate *Moll Flanders* and *Captain Singleton* into the languages of Hafiz and Omar! But the Bible Society was ready to his hand, and Borrow did nothing by halves. A good hater and a staunch friend, he was loyal to the Bible Society in no half-hearted way, and not the most pronounced quarrel with forces obviously quite out of tune with his nature led to any real slackening of that loyalty. In the end a portion of his property went to swell the Bible Society's funds.<sup>2</sup>

When Borrow became one of its servants, the Bible Society was only in its third decade. It was founded in the year 1804, and had the names of William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, and Zachary Macaulay on its first committee. To circulate the authorised version of the Bible without note or comment was the first ideal that these worthy men set before them; never to the entire satisfaction of the great printing organisations, which already had a considerable financial interest in such a circulation. For long years the words "Sold under cost price" upon the Bibles of the Society excited mingled feelings among those interested in the book trade. The Society's first idea was limited to Bibles in the English tongue. This was speedily modified.

<sup>1</sup> Keep not standing, fixed and rooted,  
Briskly venture, briskly roam:  
Head and hand, where'er thou foot it,  
And stout heart, are still at home.  
In each land the sun does visit:  
We are gay whate'er betide.  
To give room for wandering is it,  
That the world was made so wide.  
(Carlyle's translation.)

<sup>2</sup> Through the will of his stepdaughter, Henrietta MacCubrey.

## The Life of George Borrow

A Bible Society was set up in Nuremberg to which money was granted by the parent organisation. A Bible in the Welsh language was circulated broadcast through the Principality, and so the movement grew. From the first it had one of its principal centres in Norwich, where Joseph John Gurney's house was open to its committee, and at its annual gatherings at Earlham his sister Elizabeth Fry took a leading part, while Wilberforce, Charles Simeon, the famous preacher, and Legh Richmond, whose *Dairyman's Daughter* Borrow failed to appreciate, were of the company. "Uncles Buxton and Cunningham are here," we find one of Joseph John Gurney's daughters writing in describing a Bible Society gathering. This was John Cunningham, rector of Harrow, and it was his brother who helped Borrow to his position in connection with the Society, as we shall see. At the moment of these early meetings Borrow is but a boy, meeting Joseph Gurney on the banks of the river near Earlham, and listening to his discourse upon angling. The work of the Bible Society in Russia may be said to have commenced when one John Paterson of Glasgow, who had been a missionary of the Congregational body, went to St. Petersburg during those critical months of 1812 that Napoleon was marching into Russia. Paterson indeed, William Canton tells us, was "one of the last to behold the old Tartar wall and high brick towers" and other splendours of the Moscow which in a month or two were to be consumed by the flames. Paterson was back again in St. Petersburg before the French were at the gates of Moscow, and it is noteworthy that while Moscow was burning, and the Czar was on his way to join his army, this remarkable Scot was submitting to Prince Galitzin a plan for a Bible Society in St. Petersburg, and a memorial to the Czar thereon:

The plan and memorial were examined by the Czar on the 18th (of December); with a stroke of his pen he gave his sanction—"So be it, Alexander"; and as he wrote, the last tattered remnants of the Grand Army struggled across the ice of the Niemen.<sup>1</sup>

The Society was formed in January 1813, and when the Czar returned to St. Petersburg in 1815, after the shattering of Napoleon's power, he authorised a new translation of the

<sup>1</sup> Canton's *History of the Bible Society*, vol. 1. 195.

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Bible into modern Russian. From Russia it was not a far cry, where the spirit of evangelisation held sway, to Manchuria and to China. To these remote lands the Bible Society desired to send its literature. In 1822 the gospel of St. Matthew was printed in St. Petersburg in Manchu. Ten years later the type of the whole New Testament in that language was lying in the Russian capital. "All that was required was a Manchu scholar to see the work through the press." Here came the chance for Borrow. At this period there resided at Oulton Hall, Suffolk, but a few miles from Norwich, a family of the name of Skepper, Edmund and Anne his wife, with their two children, Breame and Mary. Mary married in 1817 one Henry Clarke, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. He died afterwards of consumption. A posthumous child of the marriage, Henrietta Mary, was born two months after her father died. Mary Clarke, as she now was, threw herself with zest into all the religious enthusiasms of the locality, and the Rev. Francis Cunningham, Vicar of St. Margaret's, Lowestoft, was one of her friends. Borrow had met Mary Clarke on one of her visits to Lowestoft, and she had doubtless been impressed with his fine presence, to say nothing of the intelligence and varied learning of the young man. The following note, the first communication I can find from Borrow to his future wife, indicates how matters stood at the time:

TO MRS. CLARKE

ST. GILES, NORWICH, 22 October, 1832.

DEAR MADAM,—According to promise I transmit you a piece of Oriental writing, namely the tale of Blue Beard, translated into Turkish by myself. I wish it were in my power to send you something more worthy of your acceptance, but I hope you will not disdain the gift, insignificant though it be. Desiring to be kindly remembered to Mr. and Mrs. Skepper and the remainder of the family,—I remain, dear Madam, your most obedient humble servant,

GEORGE BORROW.

That Borrow owed his introduction to Mr. Cunningham to Mrs. Clarke is clear, although Cunningham, in his letter to the Bible Society urging the claims of Borrow, refers to the fact that a "young farmer" in the neighbourhood had introduced him. This was probably her brother, Breame

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Skepper. Dr. Knapp was of the opinion that Joseph John Gurney obtained Borrow his appointment, but the recently published correspondence of Borrow with the Bible Society makes it clear that Cunningham wrote—on 27th December, 1832—recommending Borrow to the secretary, the Rev. Andrew Brandram. How little he knew of Borrow is indicated by the fact that he referred to him as “independent in circumstances.” Brandram told Caroline Fox many years afterwards that Gurney had effected the introduction, but this was merely a lapse of memory. In fact we find Borrow asking to be allowed to meet Gurney before his departure. In any case he has himself told us, in one of the brief biographies of himself that he wrote, that he promptly walked to London, covering the whole distance of 112 miles in twenty-seven hours, and that his expenses amounted to 5½d. laid out in a pint of ale, a half-pint of milk, a roll of bread and two apples. He reached London in the early morning, called at the offices of the Bible Society in Earl Street, and was kindly received by Andrew Brandram and Joseph Jowett, the two secretaries. He was asked if he would care to learn Manchu, and go to St. Petersburg. He was given six months for the task, and doubtless also some money on account. He returned to Norwich more luxuriously—by mail coach. In June, 1833, we find a letter from Borrow to Jowett, dated from Willow Lane, Norwich, and commencing, “I have mastered Manchu, and I should feel obliged by your informing the committee of the fact, and also my excellent friend, Mr. Brandram.” A long reply to this by Jowett is among my Borrow Papers, but the Bible Society clearly kept copies of its letters, and a portion of this one has been printed. It shows that Borrow went through much heart-burning before his destiny was finally settled. At last he was again invited to London, and found himself as one of two candidates for the privilege of going to Russia. The examination consisted of a Manchu hymn, of which Borrow’s version seems to have proved the more acceptable, and he afterwards printed it in his *Targum*. Finally, on the 5th of July, 1833, Borrow received a letter from Jowett offering him the appointment with a salary of £200 a year and expenses. The letter contained his first lesson in the then unaccustomed discipline of the Evangelical vocabulary. He was not at first at home in the precise measure

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of unction required by his new friends. Borrow had spoken of the prospect of becoming "useful to the Deity, to man, and to himself." "Doubtless you meant," commented Jowett, "the prospect of glorifying God," and Jowett frankly tells him that his tone of confidence in speaking of himself "had alarmed some of the excellent members of our committee." Borrow adapted himself at once, and is congratulated by Jowett in a later communication upon the "truly Christian" spirit of his next letter.

By an interesting coincidence there was living in Norwich at the moment when Borrow was about to leave it, a man who had long identified himself with good causes in Russia, and had lived in that country for a considerable period of his life. John Venning was born in Totnes in 1776, and he is buried—in the Rosary Cemetery—at Norwich, where he died in 1858 after twenty-eight years' residence in that city. He started for St. Petersburg four years after John Howard had died, ostensibly on behalf of the commercial house with which he was associated, but with the intention of carrying on the work of that great man in prison reform. Alexander I. was on the throne, and he made Venning his friend, frequently conversing with him upon religious subjects. He became the treasurer of a society for the humanising of Russian prisons; but when Nicholas became Czar in 1825 Venning's work became more difficult, though the Emperor was sympathetic. Venning returned to England in 1830, and thus opportunely, in 1833, was able to give his fellow-townsmen letters of introduction to Prince Galitzin and other Russian notables, so that Borrow was able to set forth under the happiest auspices—with an entire change of conditions from those eight years of semi-starvation that he was now to leave behind him for ever. Borrow left London for St. Petersburg on 31st July, 1833, not forgetting to pay his mother before he left the £17 he had had to borrow during his time of stress. Always devoted to his mother, Borrow sent her sums of money at intervals from the moment the power of earning came to him. We shall never know, we can only surmise, something of the self-sacrificing devotion of that mother during the years in which Borrow had failed to find remunerative work. Wherever he wandered there had always been a home in the Willow Lane cottage. It is probable that much the greater

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part of the period of his eight years of penury was spent under her roof. Yet we may be sure that the good mother never once reproached her son. She had just that touch of idealism in her character that made for faith and hope. In any case never more was Borrow to suffer penury, or to be a burden on his mother. Henceforth, to her dying day, she was to be his devoted care.

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## CHAPTER XV

### ST. PETERSBURG AND JOHN I. HASFELD

BORROW travelled by way of Hamburg and Lübeck to Travemünde, whence he went by sea to St. Petersburg, now called Petrograd, where he arrived on the twentieth of August, 1833. He was back in London in September, 1835, and thus it will be seen that he spent two years in Russia. After the hard life he had led, everything was now rose-coloured. "Petersburg is the finest city in the world," he wrote to Mr. Jowett; "neither London nor Paris nor any other European capital which I have visited has sufficient pretensions to enter into comparison with it in respect to beauty and grandeur." But the striking thing about Borrow in these early years was his capacity for making friends. He had not been a week in St. Petersburg before he had gained the regard of one William Glen, who, in 1825, had been engaged by the Bible Society to translate the Old Testament into Persian. The clever Scot, of whom Borrow was informed by a competent judge that he was "a Persian scholar of the first water," was probably too heretical for the Society, which recalled him, much to his chagrin. "He is a very learned man, but of very simple and unassuming manners," wrote Borrow to Jowett. His version of the *Psalms* appeared in 1830, and of *Proverbs* in 1831. Thus he was going home in despair, but seems to have had "good talk" on the way with Borrow in St. Petersburg. In 1845 his complete Old Testament in Persian appeared in Edinburgh. This William Glen has been confused with another William Glen, a law student, who taught Carlyle Greek, but they had nothing in common. Borrow and Carlyle could not possibly have had friends in common. Borrow was drawn towards this William Glen by his enthusiasm for the Persian language. But Glen departed out of his life very quickly. Hasfeld, who entered it about the same time, was to stay longer. Hasfeld was a Dane, now thirty-three years of age,

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who, after a period in the Foreign Office at Copenhagen, had come to St. Petersburg as an interpreter to the Danish Legation, but made quite a good income as a professor of European languages in cadet schools and elsewhere. The English language and literature would seem to have been his favourite topic. His friendship for Borrow was a great factor in Borrow's life in Russia and elsewhere. If Borrow's letters to Hasfeld should ever come to light, they will prove the best that he wrote. Hasfeld's letters to Borrow were preserved by him. Three of them are in my possession. Others were secured by Dr. Knapp, who made far too little use of them. They are all written in Danish on foreign notepaper: flowery, grandiloquent productions we may admit, but if we may judge a man by his correspondents, we have a revelation of a more human Borrow than the correspondence with the friends at Earl Street reveals:

ST. PETERSBURG, 6/18 November, 1836.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Much water has run through the Neva since I last wrote to you, my last letter was dated 5/17th April; the last letter I received from you was dated Madrid, 23rd May, and I now see with regret that it is still unanswered; it is, however, a good thing that I have not written as often to you as I have thought about you, for otherwise you would have received a couple of letters daily, because the sun never sets without you, my lean friend, entering into my imagination. I received the Spanish letter a day or two before I left for Stockholm, and it made the journey with me, for it was in my mind to send you an epistle from Svea's capital, but there were so many petty hindrances that I was nearly forgetting myself, let alone correspondence. I lived in Stockholm as if each day were to be my last, swam in champagne, or rested in girls' embraces. You doubtless blush for me; you may do so, but don't think that that conviction will murder my almost shameless candour, the only virtue which I possess, in a superfluous degree. In Sweden I tried to be lovable, and succeeded, to the astonishment of myself and everybody else. I reaped the reward on the most beautiful lips, which only too often had to complain that the fascinating Dane was faithless like the foam of the sea and the ice of spring. Every wrinkle which seriousness had impressed on my face vanished in joy and smiles; my frozen heart melted and pulsed with the rapid beat of gladness; in short, I was not recognisable. Now I have come back to my old wrinkles, and make sacrifice again on the altar of friendship, and when the incense, this letter, reaches you, then prove to me your pleasure, wherever you may be, and let an echo of friendship's voice resound from Granada's Alhambra or Sahara's deserts. But I know that you,

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good soul, will write and give me great pleasure by informing me that you are happy and well; when I get a letter from you my heart rejoices, and I feel as if I were happy, and that is what happiness consists of. Therefore let your soldierlike letters march promptly to their place of arms—paper—and move in close columns to St. Petersburg, where they will find warm winter quarters. I have received a letter from my correspondent in London, Mr. Edward Thomas Allan, No. 11 North Audley St.; he informs me that my manuscript has been promenading about, calling on publishers without having been well received; some of them would not even look at it, because it smelt of Russian leather; others kept it for three or six weeks and sent it back with "Thanks for the loan." They probably used it to get rid of the moth out of their old clothes. It first went to Longman and Co.'s, Paternoster Row; Bull of Hollis St.; Saunders and Otley, Conduit St.; John Murray of Albemarle St., who kept it for three weeks; and finally it went to Bentley of New Burlington St., who kept it for SIX weeks and returned it; now it is to pay a visit to a Mr. Colburn, and if he won't have the abandoned child, I will myself care for it. If this finds you in London, which is quite possible, see whether you can do anything for me in this matter. Thank God, I shall not buy bread with the shillings I perhaps may get for a work which has cost me twenty nights, for I cannot work during the day. In *The Atlas*, No. 436, issued on the 3rd March this year, you will find an article which I wrote, and in which you are referred to; in the same paper you will also find an extract from my translation. I hope that article will meet with your approbation. Ivan Semionovitch sends his kind regards to you. I dare not write any more, for then I should make the letter a double one, and it may perhaps go after you to the continent; if it reaches you in England, write AT ONCE to your sincere friend.

J. P. HASFELD.

My address is, Stieglitz and Co., St. Petersburg.

ST. PETERSBURG, 9th/21st July, 1842.

DEAR FRIEND,—I do not know how I shall begin, for you have been a long time without any news from me, and the fault is mine, for the last letter was from you; as a matter of fact, I did produce a long letter for you last year in September, but you did not get it, because it was too long to send by post and I had no other opportunity, so that, as I am almost tired of the letter, you shall, nevertheless, get it one day, for perhaps you will find something interesting in it; I cannot do so, for I never like to read over my own letters. Six days ago I commenced my old hermit life; my sisters left me on the 3rd/15th July, and are now, with God's help, in Denmark. They left with the French steamer *Amsterdam*, and had two Russian ladies with them, who are to spend a few months with us and visit the sea watering-places. These ladies are the Misses Koladkin, and have learnt English from me, and became my sisters' friends as soon as they could

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understand each other. My sisters have also made such good progress in your language that they would be able to arouse your astonishment. They read and understand everything in English, and, thank you, very much for the pleasure you gave them with your "Targum"; they know how to appreciate "King Christian stood by the high mast," and everything which you have translated of languages with which they are acquainted. They have not had more than sixty real lessons in English. After they had taken ten lessons, I began, to their great despair, to speak English, and only gave them a Danish translation when it was absolutely necessary. The result was that they became so accustomed to English that it scarcely ever occurs to them to speak Danish together; when one cannot get away from me one must learn from me. The brothers and sisters remaining behind are now also to go to school when they get home, for they have recognised how pleasant it is to speak a language which servants and those around one do not understand. During all the winter my dearest thought was how, this summer, I was going to visit my long, good friend, who was previously lean and who is now fat, and how I should let him fatten me a little, so as to be able to withstand better the long winter in Russia; I would then in the autumn, like the bears, go into my winter lair fat and sleek, and of all these romantic thoughts none has materialised, but I have always had the joy of thinking them and of continuing them; I can feel that I smile when such ideas run through my mind. I am convinced that if I had nothing else to do than to employ my mind with pleasant thoughts, I should become fat on thoughts alone. The principal reason why this real pleasure journey had to be postponed, was that my eldest sister, Hanna, became ill about Easter, and it was not until the end of June that she was well enough to travel. I will not speak about the confusion which a sick lady can cause in a bachelor's house, occasionally I almost lost my patience. For the amount of roubles which that illness cost I could very well have travelled to America and back again to St. Petersburg; I have, however, the consolation in my reasonable trouble that the money which the doctor and chemist have received was well spent. The lady got about again after she had caused me and Augusta just as much pain, if not more, than she herself suffered. Perhaps you know how amiable people are when they suffer from liver trouble; I hope you may never get it. I am not anxious to have it either, for you may do what the devil you like for such persons, and even then they are not satisfied. We have had great festivals here by reason of the Emperor's marriage; I did not move a step to see the pageantry; moreover, it is difficult to find anything fresh in it which would afford me enjoyment; I have seen illuminations and fireworks, the only attractive thing there was must have been the King of Prussia; but as I do not know that good man, I have not very great interest in him either; nor, so I am told, did he ask for me, and he went away without troubling himself in the slightest about me; it was a good thing that I did not bother him. J. P. H.

# St. Petersburg and John P. Hasfeld

ST. PETERSBURG, 26th April/8th May, 1858.

DEAR FRIEND,—I thank you for your friendly letter of the 12th April, and also for the invitation to visit you. I am thinking of leaving Russia soon, perhaps permanently, for twenty-seven years are enough of this climate. It is as yet undecided when I leave, for it depends on business matters which must be settled, but I hope it will be soon. What I shall do I do not yet know either, but I shall have enough to live on; perhaps I shall settle down in Denmark. It is very probable that I shall come to London in the summer, and then I shall soon be at Yarmouth with you, my old true friend. It was a good thing that you at last wrote, for it would have been too bad to extend your disinclination to write letters even to me. The last period one stays in a country is strange, and I have many persons whom I have to separate from. If you want anything done in Russia, let me know promptly; when I am in movement I will write, so that you may know where I am and what has become of me. I have been ill nearly all the winter, but now feel daily better, and when I get on the water I shall soon be well. We have already had hot and thundery weather, but it has now become cool again. I have already sold the greater part of my furniture, and am living in furnished apartments which cost me seventy roubles per month; I shall soon be tired of that. I am expecting a letter from Denmark which will settle matters, and then I can get ready and spread my wings to get out into the world, for this is not the world, but Russia. I see you have changed houses, for last year you lived at No. 37. With kindest regards to your dear ones, I am, dear friend, yours sincerely,  
JOHN P. HASFELD.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE MANCHU BIBLE—"TARGUM"—"THE TALISMAN"

As for the absurd object for which Borrow was sent to Russia the less said the better. Any of my readers who care for the survey of human folly associated with indiscriminating Bible worship can read of this particular example in the Society's own records.<sup>1</sup> The Bible Society wanted the Bible to be set up in the Manchu language, the official language of the Chinese Court and Government. A Russian scholar named Lipóftsof, who had spent twenty years in China, undertook in 1821 to translate the New Testament into Manchu for £560. Lipóftsof had done his work in 1826, and had sent two manuscript copies to London. In 1832 the Rev. William Swan of the London Missionary Society in passing through St. Petersburg discovered a transcript of a large part of the Old and New Testament in Manchu, made by one Pierot, a French Jesuit, many years before. This transcript was unavailable, but a second was soon afterwards forthcoming for free publication if a qualified Manchu scholar could be found to see it through the Press. Mr. Swan's communication of these facts to the Bible Society in London gave Borrow his opportunity. It was his task to find the printers, buy the paper, and hire the qualified compositors for setting the type. It must be admitted Borrow worked hard for his £200 a year. First he had to ask the diplomatists for permission from the Russian Government, not now so friendly to British missionary zeal. The Russian Bible Society had been suppressed in 1826. He succeeded here. Then he had to continue his studies in the Manchu language. He had written from Norwich to Mr. Jowett on 9th June, 1833, "I have mastered Manchu," but on 20th January, 1834, we find him writing to the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of George Borrow to the British and Foreign Bible Society*, published by Direction of the Committee. Edited by T. H. Darlow. Hodder and Stoughton, 1911. The Russian Correspondence occupies pages 1-97.

## The Manchu Bible

same correspondent: "I pay about six shillings, English, for each lesson, which I grudge not, for the perfect acquirement of Manchu is one of my most ardent wishes."<sup>1</sup> Then he found the printers—a German firm, Schultz and Beneze—who probably printed the two little books of Borrow's own for him as a "make weight." He purchased paper for his Manchu translation with an ability that would have done credit to a modern newspaper manager. Every detail of these transactions is given in his letters to the Bible Society, and one cannot but be amused at Borrow's explanation to the Reverend Secretary of the little subterfuges by which he proposed to "best" the godless for the benefit of the godly:

Knowing but too well that it is the general opinion of the people of this country that Englishmen are made of gold, and that it is only necessary to ask the most extravagant price for any article in order to obtain it, I told no person, to whom I applied, who I was, or of what country; and I believe I was supposed to be a German.<sup>2</sup>

Then came the composing or setting up of the type of the book. When Borrow was called to account by his London employers, who were not sure whether he was wasting time, he replied: "I have been working in the printing-office as a common compositor, between ten and thirteen hours every day." In another letter Borrow records further difficulties with the printers after the composition had been effected. Several of the working printers, it appears, "went away in disgust." Then he adds:

I was resolved "to do or die," and, instead of distressing and perplexing the Committee with complaints, to write nothing until I could write something perfectly satisfactory, as I now can; and to bring about that result I have spared neither myself nor my own money. I have toiled in a close printing-office the whole day, during ninety degrees of heat, for the purpose of setting an example, and have bribed people to work whom nothing but bribes would induce so to do. I am obliged to say all this in self-justification. No member of the Bible Society would ever have heard a syllable respecting what I have undergone but for the question, "What has Mr. Borrow been about?"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Darlow: *Letters to the Bible Society*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 61.

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It is not my intention to add materially to the letters of Borrow from Russia and from Spain that have already been published, although many are in my possession. They reveal an aspect of the life of Borrow that has been amply dealt with already, and it is an aspect that interests me but little. Here, however, is one hitherto unpublished letter that throws much light upon Borrow's work at this time, and shows, moreover, how well he was learning the cant phrases which found acceptance with his friends in Earl Street:

TO THE REV. ANDREW BRANDRAM

ST. PETERSBURG, 18th Oct., 1833.

REVEREND SIR,—Supposing that you will not be displeased to hear how I am proceeding, I have taken the liberty to send a few lines by a friend<sup>1</sup> who is leaving Russia for England. Since my arrival in Petersburg I have been occupied eight hours every day in transcribing a Manchu manuscript of the Old Testament belonging to Baron Schilling, and I am happy to be able to say that I have just completed the last of it, the Rev. Mr. Swan, the Scottish missionary, having before my arrival copied the previous part. Mr. Swan departs to his mission in Siberia in about two months, during most part of which time I shall be engaged in collating our transcripts with the original. It is a great blessing that the Bible Society has now prepared the whole of the Sacred Scriptures in Manchu, which will doubtless, when printed, prove of incalculable benefit to tens of millions who have hitherto been ignorant of the will of God, putting their trust in idols of wood and stone instead of in a crucified Saviour. I am sorry to say that this country in respect to religion is in a state almost as lamentable as the darkest regions of the East, and the blame of this rests entirely upon the Greek hierarchy, who discountenance all attempts to the spiritual improvement of the people, who, poor things, are exceedingly willing to receive instruction, and, notwithstanding the scantiness of their means in general for the most part, eagerly buy the tracts which a few pious English Christians cause to be printed and hawked in the neighbourhood. But no one is better aware, Sir, than yourself that without the Scriptures men can never be brought to a true sense of their fallen and miserable state, and of the proper means to be employed to free themselves from the thralldom of Satan. The last few copies which remained of the New Testament in Russian were purchased and distributed a few days ago, and it is lamentable to be compelled to state that at the present there appears no probability of another edition being permitted in the modern language. It is true that there are near twenty thousand copies of the Slavonic bible in the shop which is entrusted with the sale of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Glen.

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the books of the late Russian Bible Society, but the Slavonian translation is upwards of a thousand years old, having been made in the eighth century, and differs from the dialect spoken at present in Russia as much as the old Saxon does from the modern English. Therefore it cannot be of the slightest utility to any but the learned, that is, to about ten individuals in one thousand. I hope and trust that the Almighty will see fit to open some door for the illumination of this country, for it is not to be wondered if vice and crime be very prevalent here when the people are ignorant of the commandments of God. Is it to be wondered that the people follow their every day pursuits on the Sabbath when they know not the unlawfulness of so doing? Is it to be wondered that they steal when only in dread of the laws of the country, and are not deterred by the voice of conscience which only exists in a few? This accounts for their profanation of their Sabbath, their proneness to theft, etc. It is only surprising that so much goodness is to be found in their nature as is the case, for they are mild, polite, and obliging, and in most of their faces is an expression of great kindness and benignity. I find that the slight knowledge which I possess of the Russian tongue is of the utmost service to me here, for the common opinion in England that only French and German are spoken by persons of any respectability in Petersburg is a great and injurious error. The nobility, it is true, for the most part speak French when necessity obliges them, that is, when in company with foreigners who are ignorant of Russian, but the affairs of most people who arrive in Petersburg do not lie among the nobility, therefore a knowledge of the language of the country, unless you associate solely with your own countrymen, is indispensable. The servants speak no language but their native tongue, and also nine out of ten of the middle classes of Russians. I might as well address Mr. Lipóftsof, who is to be my coadjutor in the edition of the New Testament (in Manchu), in Hebrew as in either French or German, for though he can read the first a little he cannot speak a word of it or understand when spoken. I will now conclude by wishing you all possible happiness. I have the honour to be, etc.,

GEORGE BORROW.

When the work was done at so great a cost of money, and of energy and enthusiasm on the part of George Borrow, it was found that the books were useless. Most of these New Testaments were afterwards sent out to China, and copies distributed by the missionaries there as opportunities offered. It was found then—why not before is not explained—that the Manchus in China were able to read Chinese, preferring it to their own language, which indeed had become almost confined to official use.<sup>1</sup> In fact what was

<sup>1</sup> Darlow: *Letters to the Bible Society*, p. 96.

## The Life of George Borrow

a congenial livelihood for Borrow—this production of a Bible in the Manchu tongue—would have been death and desolation to the highly placed caste of the Chinese Empire had these been compelled to make use of Borrow's efforts. The experiment was not to be made. The Bible Society had such comfort for their subscribers as is contained in the fact that in the year 1859 editions of *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark* were published in Manchu and Chinese side by side, the Manchu text being a reprint of that edited by Borrow, and that these books are still in use in Chinese Turkestan. But Borrow had here to suffer one of the many disappointments of his life. If not actually a gypsy he had all a gypsy's love of wandering. No impartial reader of the innumerable letters of this period can possibly claim that there was in Borrow any of the proselytising zeal or evangelical fervour which wins for the names of Henry Martyn and of David Livingstone so much honour and sympathy even among the least zealous. At the best Borrow's zeal for religion was of the order of Dr. Keate, the famous headmaster of Eton—"Blessed are the pure in heart . . . if you are not pure in heart, by God, I'll flog you!" Borrow had got his New Testaments printed, and he wanted to distribute them because he wished to see still more of the world, and had no lack of courage to carry out any well-defined scheme of the organisation which was employing him. Borrow had thrown out constant hints in his letters home. People had suggested to him, he said, that he was printing Testaments for which he would never find readers. If you wish for readers, they had said to him, "you must seek them among the natives of Peking and the fierce hordes of desert Tartary." And it was this last most courageous thing that Borrow proposed. Let him, he said to Mr. Jowett, fix his headquarters at Kiachta upon the northern frontier of China. The Society should have an agent there:

I am a person of few words, and will therefore state without circumlocution that I am willing to become that agent. I speak Russ, Manchu, and the Tartar or broken Turkish of the Russian steppes, and have also some knowledge of Chinese, which I might easily improve at Kiachta, half of the inhabitants of which town are Chinamen. I am therefore not altogether unqualified for such an adventure.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Darlow: *Letters to the Bible Society*, p. 65.

## The Manchu Bible

The Bible Committee considered this and other plans through the intervening months, and it seems clear that at the end they would have sanctioned some form of missionary work for Borrow in the Chinese Empire; but on 1st June, 1835, he wrote to say that the Russian Government, solicitous of maintaining good relations with China, would not grant him a passport across Siberia except on the condition that he carried not one single Manchu Bible thither.<sup>1</sup> And so Borrow's dreams were left unfulfilled. He was never to see China or the farther East, although, because he was a dreamer and like his hero, Defoe, a bit of a liar, he often said he had. In September, 1835, he was back in England awaiting in his mother's home in Norwich further commissions from his friends of the Bible Society.

Work on the Manchu New Testament did not entirely absorb Borrow's activities in St. Petersburg. He seems to have made a proposition to another organisation, as the following letter indicates. The proposal does not appear to have borne any fruit:

PRAYER BOOK AND HOMILY SOCIETY,  
No. 4 EXETER HALL, LONDON, *January 16th, 1835.*

SIR,—Your letters dated July and November 17, 1834, and addressed to the Rev. F. Cunningham, have been laid before the Committee of the Prayer Book and Homily Society, who have agreed to print the translation of the first three Homilies into the Russian language at St. Petersburg, under the direction of Mr. and M. Biller, so soon as they shall have caused the translation to undergo a thorough revision, and shall have certified the same to this Society. I write by this post to Mrs. Biller on the subject. In respect to the second Homily in Manchu, if we rightly understand your statement, an edition of five hundred copies may be sent forth, the whole expense of which, including paper and printing, will amount to about £12. If we are correct in this the Committee are willing to bear the expense of five hundred copies, by way of trial, their wish being this, viz.: that printed copies should be put into the hands of the most competent persons, who shall be invited to offer such remarks on the translation as shall seem desirable; especially that Dr. Morrison of Canton should be requested to submit copies to the inspection of Manchu scholars as he shall think fit. When the translation has been thoroughly revised, the Committee will consider the propriety of printing a larger edition. They think that the plan of submitting copies in letters of gold to the

<sup>1</sup> Darlow: *Letters to the Bible Society*, p. 81.

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inspection of the highest personages in China should probably be deferred till the translation has been thus revised. We hope that this resolution will be satisfactory to you; but the Committee, not wishing to prescribe a narrower limit than such as is strictly necessary, have directed me to say, that should the expense of an edition of five hundred copies of the Homily in Manchu exceed £12, they will still be willing to meet it, but not beyond the sum of £15.

Should you print this edition be pleased to furnish us with twenty-five copies, and send twenty-five copies at the least to Rev. Dr. Morrison, at Canton, if you have the means of doing so; if not, we should wish to receive fifty copies, that we may send twenty-five to Canton. In this case you will be at liberty to draw a bill upon us for the money, within the limits specified above, in such manner as is most convenient. Possibly Mr. and Mrs. Biller may be able to assist you in this matter. Believe me, dear Sir, yours most sincerely,

C. R. PRITCHETT.

Mr. G. Borrow.

I am not aware whether I am addressing a clergyman or a layman, and therefore shall direct as above. Will you be so kind as to send the MS. of the Russian Homilies to Mrs. Biller?

. . . . .

During Borrow's last month or two in St. Petersburg he printed two thin octavo volumes of translations—some of them verses which, undeterred by the disheartening reception of earlier efforts, he had continued to make from each language in succession that he had the happiness to acquire, although most of the poems are from his old portfolios. These little books were named *Targum* and *The Talisman*. Dr. Knapp calls the latter an appendix to the former. They are absolutely separate volumes of verse. The publishers, it will be seen, are the German firm that printed the Manchu New Testament, Schultz and Benezé. Borrow's preface to *Targum* is dated "St. Petersburg, June 1, 1835." Here in *Targum* we find the trial poem which in competition with a rival candidate had won him the privilege of going to Russia for the Bible Society—*The Mountain Chase*. Here also among new verses are some from the Arabic, the Persian, and the Turkish. If it be true, as his friend Hasfeld said, that here was a poet who was able to render another without obbing the garland of a single leaf—that would but prove that the poetry which Borrow rendered was not of the first order. Nor taking another standard—the capacity to render

## “Targum” and “The Talisman”

the ballad with a force that captures “the common people” —can we agree with William Bodham Donne, who was delighted with *Targum* and said that “the language and rhythm are vastly superior to Macaulay’s *Lays of Ancient Rome*.” In *The Talisman* we have four little poems from the Russian of Pushkin followed by another poem, *The Mermaid*, by the same author. Three other poems in Russian and Polish complete the little book. Borrow left behind him in St. Petersburg with his friend, Hasfeld, a presentation copy for Pushkin, who, when he received it, expressed regret that he had not met his translator while Borrow was in St. Petersburg.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THREE VISITS TO SPAIN

FROM his journey to Russia Borrow had acquired valuable experience, but nothing in the way of fame, although his mother had been able to record in a letter to St. Petersburg that she had heard at a Bible Society gathering in Norwich his name "sounded through the hall" by Mr. Joseph John Gurney and Mr. Cunningham, to her great delight. "All this is very pleasing to me," she said, "God bless you!" Even more pleasing to Borrow must have been a letter from Mary Clarke, his future wife, who was able to tell him that she heard Francis Cunningham refer to him as "one of the most extraordinary and interesting individuals of the present day." But these tributes were not all-satisfying to an ambitious man, and this Borrow undoubtedly was. His Russian journey was followed by five weeks of idleness in Norwich varied by the one excitement of attending a Bible meeting at Oulton with the Reverend Francis Cunningham in the chair, when "Mr. George Borrow from Russia"<sup>1</sup> made one of the usual conventional missionary speeches, Mary Clarke's brother, Breame Skepper, being also among the orators. Borrow begged for more work from the Society. He urged the desirability of carrying out its own idea of an investigation in Portugal and perhaps also in Spain, and hinted that he could write a small volume concerning what he saw and heard which might cover the expense of the expedition. So much persistency conquered. Borrow sailed from London on 6th November, 1835, and reached Lisbon on 12th November, this his first visit to the Peninsula lasting exactly eleven months. The next four years and six months were to be spent mainly in

<sup>1</sup> *Norfolk Chronicle*, 17th October, 1835.

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Spain. Broadly the time divides itself in the following fashion:

1st Tour (via Lisbon), Nov. 1835 to Oct. 1836.	2nd Tour (via Cadiz), Nov. 1836 to Sept. 1838.	3rd Tour (via Cadiz), Dec. 1838 to Mar. 1840.
Lisbon.	Cadiz.	Cadiz.
Mafia.	Lisbon.	Seville.
Evora.	Seville.	Madrid.
Badajoz.	Madrid.	Malta.
Madrid.	Salamanca.	Tangier.
	Coruña.	
	Oviedo.	
	Toledo.	

What a world of adventure do the mere names of these places call up. Borrow entered the Peninsula at an exciting period of its history. Traces of the great war in which Napoleon's legions faced those of Wellington still abounded. Here and there a bridge had disappeared, and some of Borrow's strange experiences on ferry-boats were indirectly due to the results of Napoleon's ambition. Everywhere there was still war in the land. Portugal indeed had just passed through a revolution. The partisans of the infant Queen Maria II. had been fighting with her uncle Dom Miguel for eight years, and it was only a few short months before Borrow landed at Lisbon that Maria had become undisputed queen. Spain, to which Borrow speedily betook himself, was even in a worse state. She was in the throes of a six years' war. Queen Isabel II., a child of three, reigned over a chaotic country with her mother Dona Christina as regent; her uncle Don Carlos was a formidable claimant to the throne and had the support of the absolutist and clerical parties. Borrow's political sympathies were always in the direction of absolutism; but in religion, although a staunch Church of England man, he was certainly an anti-clerical one in Roman Catholic Spain. In any case he steered judiciously enough between contending factions, describing the fanatics of either side with vigour and sometimes with humour. Mr. Brandram's injunction to Borrow "to be on his guard against becoming too much committed to one particular party" seems to have been unnecessary.

Borrow's three expeditions to Spain have more said for them than had his journey to St. Petersburg. The

# The Life of George Borrow

work of the Bible Society was and is at its highest point of human service when distributing either the Old or the New Testament in Christian countries, Spain, England, or another. Few there be to-day in any country who, in the interests of civilisation, would deny to the Bible a wider distribution. In a remote village of Spain a Bible Society's colporteur, carrying a coloured banner, sold me a copy of Cipriano de Valera's New Testament for a peseta. But in the minds of the worthy people who ran the Bible Society eighty years ago it was not so much that humanity was to be bettered as that Roman Catholicism was to be worsened. Every New Testament sold in Spain was in the eyes of the English fanatic who subscribed his silver a blow to the Church of that land. Otherwise and as to the humanising influence of the propaganda it may be said that the villages of Spain that Borrow visited could even at that time compare favourably, morally and educationally, with villages of his own county of Norfolk at the same period. The morals of the agricultural labourers of the English fen country eighty years ago were a scandal, and the peasantry read nothing; more than half of them could not read. They had not, moreover, the humanising passion for song and dance that Andalusia knew. But this is not to deny that the Bible Society under Borrow's instrumentality did a good work in Spain, nor that they did it on the whole in a broad and generous way. Borrow admits that there was a section of the Roman Catholic clergy "favourably disposed towards the circulation of the Gospel," and the Society actually fixed upon a Roman Catholic version of the Spanish Bible, that by Scio de San Miguel, although this version Borrow considered a bad translation. Much has been said about the aim of the Bible Society to provide the Bible without notes or comment—in its way a most meritorious aim, although then as now opposed to the instinct of a large number of the priests of the Roman Church. It is true that their attitude does not in any way possess the sanction of the ecclesiastical authorities. It may be urged, indeed, that the interpretation of the Bible by a priest, usually of mature judgment, and frequently of a higher education than the people with whom he is associated, is at least as trustworthy as its interpretation at the hands of very partially educated young women and exceedingly inadequately equipped young

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men who to-day provide interpretation and comment in so many of the Sunday Schools of Protestant countries.

Behold George Borrow, then, first in Portugal and a little later in Spain, upon his great mission—avowedly at first a tentative mission—rather to see what were the prospects for Bible distribution than to distribute Bibles. But Borrow's zeal knew no such limitations. Before very long he had a shop in one of the principal streets of Madrid—the Calle del Principe—much more in the heart of things than the very prosperous Bible Society of our day ventures upon.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile he is at present in Portugal not very certain of his movements, and he writes to his old friend Dr. Bowring the following letter with a request with which Bowring complied, although in the coldest manner:

TO DR. JOHN BOWRING

EVORA IN THE ALEMTEJO, 27 Decr., 1835.

DEAR SIR.—Pray excuse me for troubling you with these lines. I write to you, as usual, for assistance in my projects, convinced that you will withhold none which it may be in your power to afford—more especially when by so doing you will perhaps be procuring the happiness of our fellow creatures. I returned from dear glorious Russia about three months since, after having edited there the Manchu New Testament in eight volumes. I am now in Portugal, for the Society still do me the honour of employing me. For the last six weeks I have been wandering amongst the wilds of the Alemtejo and have introduced myself to its rustics, banditti, etc., and become very popular amongst them, but as it is much more easy to introduce oneself to the cottage than the hall (though I am not entirely unknown in the latter), I want you to give or procure me letters to the most liberal and influential minds of Portugal. I likewise want a letter from the Foreign Office to Lord De Walden, in a word, I want to make what interest I can towards obtaining the admission of the Gospel of Jesus into the public schools of Portugal which are about to be

<sup>1</sup> When in Madrid in May, 1913, I called upon Mr. William Summers, the courteous Secretary of the Madrid Branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the Flor Alta. Mr. Summers informs me that the issues of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Bibles and Testaments, in Spain for the years 1910-12 are as follows:

Year.	Bibles.	Testaments.	Portions.	Total.
1910 . . .	5,309	8,971	70,594	84,874
1911 . . .	5,665	17,481	79,525	96,671
1912 . . .	9,083	11,842	85,024	105,949

The Calle del Principe is now rapidly being pulled down and new buildings taking the place of those Borrow knew.

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establis' ed. I beg leave to state that this is *my plan*, and not other persons', as I was merely sent over to Portugal to observe the disposition of the people, therefore I do not wish to be named as an Agent of the B.S., but as a person who has plans for the mental improvement of the Portuguese; should I receive *these letters* within the space of six weeks it will be time enough, for before setting up my machine in Portugal I wish to lay the foundation of something similar in Spain. When you send the Portuguese letters direct thus:

Mr. George Borrow,  
to the care of Mr. Wilby,  
Rua Dos Restauradores, Lisbon.

I start for Spain to-morrow, and I want letters something similar (there is impudence for you) for Madrid, *which I should like to have as soon as possible*. I do not much care at present for an introduction to the Ambassador at Madrid, as I shall not commence operations seriously in Spain until I have disposed of Portugal. I will not apologise for writing to you in this manner, for you know me, but I will tell you one thing, which is that the letter which you procured for me, on my going to St. Petersburg, from Lord Palmerston, assisted me wonderfully. I called twice at your domicile on my return; the first time you were in Scotland, the second in France, and I assure you I cried with vexation. Remember me to Mrs. Bowring and God bless you.

G. BORROW.

P.S.—I am told that Mendizábal is liberal, and has been in England; perhaps he would assist me.

During this eleven months' stay in the Peninsula Borrow made his way to Madrid, and here he interviewed the British Minister, Sir George Villiers, afterwards fourth Earl of Clarendon, and had received a quite remarkable encouragement from him for the publication and distribution of the Bible. He also interviewed the Spanish Prime Minister, Mendizábal, "whom it is as difficult to get nigh as it is to approach the North Pole," and he has given us a picturesque account of the interview in *The Bible in Spain*. It was agreed that 5,000 copies of the Spanish Testament were to be reprinted from Scio's text at the expense of the Bible Society, and all these Borrow was to handle as he thought fit. Then Borrow made his way to Granada, where, under date 30th August, 1836, his autograph may be read in the visitors' book of the Alhambra:

*George Borrow Norvicensis.*

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Here he studied his friends the gypsies, now and probably then, as we may assume from his *Zincali*, the sordid scum on the hillside of that great city, but now more assuredly than then unutterably demoralised by the numerous but curious tourists who visit this rabble under police protection, the very policeman or gendarme not despising a peseta for his protective service. But Borrow's hobbies included the Romanies of every land, and a year later he produced and published a gypsy version of the Gospel of St. Luke. In October, 1836, Borrow was back in England. He found that the Bible Society approved of him. In November of the same year he left London for Cadiz on his second visit to Spain. The journey is described in *The Bible in Spain*; but here, from my Borrow Papers, is a kind letter that Mr. Brandram wrote to Borrow's mother on the occasion:

NO. 10 EAST STREET, *Jany. 11, 1837.*

MY DEAR MADAM,—I have the joyful news to send you that your son has again safely arrived at Madrid. His journey we were aware was exceedingly perilous, more perilous than we should have allowed him to take had we sooner known the extent of the danger. He begs me to write, intending to write to you himself without delay. He has suffered from the intense cold, but nothing beyond inconvenience. Accept my congratulations, and my best wishes that your dear son may be preserved to be your comfort in declining years—and may the God of all consolation himself deign to comfort your heart by the truths of that holy volume your son is endeavouring, in connection with our Society, to spread abroad.—Believe me, dear Madam, yours faithfully,

A. BRANDRAM.

Mrs. Borrow, Norwich.

A brilliant letter from Seville followed soon after, and then he went on to Madrid, not without many adventures. "The cold nearly killed me," he said. "I swallowed nearly two bottles of brandy; it affected me no more than warm water." This to kindly Mr. Brandram, who clearly had no teetotaler proclivities, for the letter, as he said, "filled his heart with joy and gladness." Meanwhile those five thousand copies of the New Testament were a-printing, Borrow superintending the work with the assistance of a new friend, Dr. Usoz. "As soon as the book is printed and issued," he tells Mr. Brandram, "I will ride forth from Madrid into the wildest parts of Spain, . . ." and so, after some corre-

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spondence with the Society which is quite entertaining, he did. The reader of *The Bible in Spain* will note some seventy separate towns and villages that Borrow visited, not without countless remarkable adventures on the way. "I felt some desire," he says in *The Romany Rye*, "to meet with one of those adventures which upon the roads of England are generally as plentiful as blackberries in autumn." Assuredly in this tour of Spanish villages Borrow met with no lack of adventures. The committee of the Bible Society authorised this tour in March, 1837, and in May Borrow started off on horseback attended by his faithful servant, Antonio. This tour was to last five months, and "if I am spared," he writes to his friend Hasfeld, "and have not fallen a prey to sickness, Carlists, banditti, or wild beasts, I shall return to Madrid." He hopes a little later, he tells Hasfeld, to be sent to China. We have then a glimpse of his servant, the excellent Antonio, which supplements that contained in *The Bible in Spain*. "He is inordinately given to drink, and is of so quarrelsome a disposition that he is almost constantly involved in some broil." Not all his weird experiences were conveyed in his letters to the Bible Society's secretary. Some of these letters, however—the more highly coloured ones—were used in *The Bible in Spain*, word for word, and wonderful reading they must have made for the secretary, who indeed asked for more, although, with a view to keeping Borrow humble—an impossible task—Mr. Brandram takes occasion to say "Mr. Graydon's letters, as well as yours, are deeply interesting," Graydon being a hated rival, as we shall see. The question of money was also not overlooked by the assiduous secretary. "I know you are no accountant," he writes, "but do not forget there are some who are," and a financial document was forwarded to Borrow about this time as a stimulus and a warning.

But Borrow was happy, for next to the adventures of five glorious months in the villages between Madrid and Coruña nothing could be more to his taste than a good, wholesome quarrel. He was imprisoned by order of the Spanish Government and released on the intervention of the British Embassy. He tells the story so graphically in *The Bible in Spain* that it is superfluous to repeat it; but here he does not tell of the great quarrel with regard

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to Lieutenant Graydon that led him to attack that worthy zealot in a letter to the Bible Society. This attack did indeed cause the Society to recall Graydon, whose zealous proclamation of anti-Romanism must, however, have been more to the taste of some of its subscribers than Borrow's "trimming" methods. Moreover, Graydon worked for love of the cause and required no salary, which must always have been in his favour. Borrow was ten days in a Madrid prison, and there, as ever, he had extraordinary adventures if we may believe his own narrative, but they are much too good to be torn from their context. Suffice to say here that in the actual correspondence we find breezy controversy between Borrow and the Society. Borrow thought that the secretary had called in question the accuracy of his statements as to this or that particular in his conduct. Ever a fighter, he appealed to the British Embassy for confirmation of his word, and finally Mr. Brandram suggested he should come back to England for a time and talk matters over with the members of the committee. An interesting letter to his future wife belongs to this period:

TO MRS. CLARKE

TOLEDO, Decr. 5, 1837.

MY DEAR MADAM,—I received your letter the day previous to my leaving Madrid for this place, whither I arrived in safety on the 2nd inst. I have availed myself of the very first opportunity of answering it which has presented itself. Permit me in the first place to sympathise sincerely in the losses which you have, it appears, lately sustained in your excellent brother, more especially as he was my own good kind friend. I little deemed when I parted from him only one short year since, at Oulton, that I was doomed never to press his honest hand again; but why should we grieve? He was a devout and humble Christian, and we have no reason to doubt that he has been admitted to the joys of his Lord; he was also zealous in his way, and although he had but two talents entrusted to him, he turned them to the best account and doubled them; perhaps he now rules over as many heavenly cities; therefore why, why should we grieve? Indeed it is possible that if we knew all, we should deem that we had high and cogent reason to rejoice that the Lord has snatched him from earth and earthly ties at this particular season. His principles were very excellent, but an evil and undue influence, continually exerted over him, might have gradually corrupted his heart, until it became alienated from loyalty and true religion, which are indeed inseparable;

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for the latter he might have substituted the vulgar savage bigotry of what is called "Dissent," for the former "Radicalism," that upas tree of the British Isles whose root is in the infernal pit.

You have stated to me how unpleasantly you are situated, and certain heavy trials which you have lately been subjected to. You have, moreover, done me the honour to ask my advice upon these points. I give it without hesitation and in a very few words. Maintain unflinchingly your right, your whole right, without yielding one particle, without abandoning one position, as the slightest manifestation of weakness and hesitation will be instantly taken advantage of by your adversaries, and be fraught with danger to yourself. Permit me here to state that it was in anticipation of something allied to the evil spirit which has lately been displayed towards you, I advised you on my last visit never to be persuaded to resign the house which you now occupy; it is one of the strongest of your entrenchments—abandon it and the foot of the enemy is in your camp, and with the help of law and chicanery you might be reduced to extremity. A line of the poet Spencer is strongly applicable to your situation:

"Be firm, be firm, and everywhere be firm."

I would likewise strongly advise that with the least possible delay you call in the entire amount of whatever claim you possess on the landed property lately your brother's, else I foresee that you will be involved in an endless series of dispute and litigation, which by one single act of resolution you may avoid. Remember that no forbearance on your part will be properly appreciated, and that every kindly feeling and desire of conciliation which you may display, will be set down to fear, and the consciousness of standing on weak ground. I am old in the knowledge of the world and those who dwell upon it, and would rather trust myself to the loving mercies of the hungry wolves of the Spanish mountains, than to the generosity and sense of justice of the Radicals of England. However determined you may show yourself, no reasonable person can cast any blame upon you, for from the contents of your letter, it appears, that your enemies have kept no terms with you, and entirely unprovoked, have done all in their power to outrage and harrow your feelings. Enough on this point.

Toledo was formerly the capital of Spain. Its population at present barely amounts to fifteen thousand souls, though in the time of the Romans and also during the Middle Ages, its population is said to have amounted to between two and three hundred thousand souls, which at present however does not amount to fifteen thousand. It is situated about twelve leagues (40 miles) to the westward of Madrid, and is built upon a steep rocky hill, round which flows the Tagus on all sides but the North. It still possesses a great many remarkable edifices, notwithstanding that it has long since fallen into decay. Its Cathedral is the most magnificent of Spain, and is the See of

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the Primate. In the tower of this Cathedral is the famous bell of Toledo, the largest in the world, with the exception of the monster-bell of Moscow, which I have also seen. It weighs 1543 arrobes, or 37-032 pounds. It has, however, a disagreeable sound, owing to a large cleft in its side. Toledo could once boast the finest pictures in Spain, but many were stolen or destroyed [by the] French during the Peninsular War, and still more have lately been removed by order of the Government. Perhaps the most remarkable still remains. I allude to that which represents the burial of the Count of Orgaz, the masterpiece of Domenico the Greek, a most extraordinary genius some of whose productions possess merit of a very high order; the picture in question is in the little parish church of San Tomé, at the bottom of the aisle, at the left hand of the altar. Could it be purchased, I should say it would be cheap at £5,000. You will easily guess that I did not visit Toledo for the sake of seeing its curiosities, but rather in the hope of propagating the Word. I have this day caused three hundred advertisements to be affixed to the walls, informing the people where it is to be had. I have humble hope in the Lord that he will bless my labours, notwithstanding that Toledo abounds with priests, friars, and other minions of cruel Rome. Should you see my dear Mrs. Ritson, pray remember me kindly to her and assure her that I often think of her, and the same you may say to Miss Henrietta. I hope my dear Mother is well. God bless you at all times and seasons.

G. B.

P.S.—My Gipsy Translation of Luke is ready for the press, and I shall commence printing it as soon as I return to Madrid. I hope that in the event of any of these singular people visiting your neighbourhood you will seek them out, and speak to them of Christ, and tell them what is being done for their brethren in a far foreign land. A Gipsy woman and her child have paid me several visits since my arrival here; her husband is in the prison for mule-stealing, and next week departs for ten years slavery in the galleys. She is in great trouble and affliction, and says that I am the only friend she has ever met with in Spain. She goes about telling fortunes, in order to support her husband in prison, notwithstanding that he had previously abandoned her, and departed for Granada with another Gipsy woman of the name of Aurora, who persuaded him to commit the robbery, for which he is now suffering. If this is not conjugal affection, what is?

Mrs. Clarke,  
Oulton Cottage,  
Lowestoft,  
Suffolk,  
England.

In the beginning of September, 1838, Borrow was again

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in England, when he issued a lengthy and eloquent defence of his conduct and a report on "Past and Future Operations in Spain." In December of the same year Borrow was again on his way to Cadiz upon his third and last visit to Spain.

Borrow reached Cadiz on this his last visit on 31st December, 1838, and went straight to Seville, where he arrived on 2nd January, 1839. Here he took a beautiful little house, "a paradise in its way," in the Plazuela de la Pila Seca, and furnished it—clearly at the expense of his friend Mrs. Clarke of Oulton, who must have sent him a cheque for the purpose. He had been corresponding regularly with Mrs. Clarke, who had told him of her difficulties with lawyers and relatives, and Borrow had advised her to cut the Gordian knot and come to Spain. But Mrs. Clarke and her daughter, Henrietta, did not arrive from England until June.

In the intervening months Borrow had been working more in his own interests than in those of the patient Bible Society, for he started to gather material for his *Gypsies in Spain*, and this book was for the most part actually written in Seville. It was at this period that he had the many interviews with Colonel Elers Napier that we quote at length in our next chapter.

A little later he is telling Mr. Brandram of his adventure with the blind girl of Manzanares who could talk in the Latin tongue, which she had been taught by a Jesuit priest, an episode which he retold in *The Bible in Spain*. "When shall we hear," he asks, "of an English rector instructing a beggar girl in the language of Cicero?" To which Mr. Brandram, who was rector of Beckenham, replied "Cui bono?" The letters of this period are the best that he ever wrote, and are incorporated more exactly than the earlier ones in *The Bible in Spain*.

Four letters to his mother within the period of his second and third visits may well be presented together here from my Borrow Papers:

TO MRS. ANN BORROW

MADRID, July 27, 1838.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am in perfect health though just returned from a long expedition in which I have been terribly

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burnt by the sun. In about ten days I sold nearly a thousand Testaments among the labourers of the plains and mountains of Castille and La Mancha. Everybody in Madrid is wondering and saying such a thing is a miracle, as I have not entered a town, and the country people are very poor and have never seen or heard of the Testament before. But I confess to you that I dislike my situation and begin to think that I have been deceived; the B.S. have had another person on the sea-coast who has nearly ruined their cause in Spain by circulating seditious handbills and tracts. The consequence has been that many of my depots have been seized in which I kept my Bibles in various parts of the country, for the government think that he is employed by me; I told the B.S. all along what would be the consequence of employing this man, but they took huff and would scarce believe me, and now all my words are come true; I do not blame the government in the slightest degree for what they have done in many points, they have shown themselves to be my good friends, but they have been driven to the step by the insane conduct of the person alluded to. I told them frankly in my last letter that I would leave their service if they encouraged him; for I will not be put in prison again on his account, and lose another servant by the gaol fever, and then obtain neither thanks nor reward. I am going out of town again in a day or two, but I shall now write very frequently, therefore be not alarmed for I will run into no danger. Burn this letter and speak to no one about it, nor any others that I may send. God bless you, my dear mother.

G. B.

TO MRS. ANN BORROW, WILLOW LANE, ST. GILES,  
NORWICH (INGLATERRA)

MADRID, *August 5, 1838.*

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I merely write this to inform you that I am back to Madrid from my expedition. I have been very successful and have sold a great many Testaments. Indeed all the villages and towns within thirty miles have been supplied. In Madrid itself I can do nothing as I am closely watched by order of the government and not permitted to sell, so that all I do is by riding out to places where they cannot follow me. I do not blame them, for they have much to complain of, though nothing of me, but if the Society will countenance such men as they have lately done in the South of Spain they must expect to reap the consequences. It is very probable that I may come to England in a little time, and then you will see me; but do not talk any more about yourself being "no more seen," for it only serves to dishearten me, and God knows I have enough to make me melancholy already. I am in a great hurry and cannot write any more at present.—I remain, dear mother, yours affectionately,

GEORGE BORROW.

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TO MRS. ANN BORROW

(No date.)

MY DEAR MAMA,—As I am afraid that you may not have received my last letter in consequence of several couriers having been stopped, I write to inform you that I am quite well.

I have been in some difficulties. I was selling so many Testaments that the priests became alarmed, and prevailed on the government to put a stop to my selling any more; they were likewise talking of prosecuting me as a witch, but they have thought better of it. I hear it is very cold in England, pray take care of yourself, I shall send you more in a few weeks.—God bless you, my dear mama,  
G. B.

It was in the middle of his third and last visit to Spain that Borrow wrote this next letter to his mother which gives the first suggestion of the romantic and happy termination of his final visit to the Peninsula:

TO MRS. ANN BORROW

SEVILLE, SPAIN, *April 27, 1839.*

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I should have written to you before I left Madrid, but I had a long and dangerous journey to make, and I wished to get it over before saying anything to you. I am now safely arrived, by the blessing of God, in Seville, which, in my opinion, is the most delightful town in the world. If it were not a strange place with a strange language I know you would like to live in it, but it is rather too late in the day for you to learn Spanish and accommodate yourself to Spanish ways. Before I left Madrid I accomplished a great deal, having sold upwards of one thousand Testaments and nearly five hundred Bibles, so that at present very few remain; indeed, not a single Bible, and I was obliged to send away hundreds of people who wanted to purchase, but whom I could not supply. All this has been done without the slightest noise or disturbance or anything that could give cause of displeasure to the government, so that I am now on very good terms with the authorities, though they are perfectly aware of what I am about. Should the Society think proper to be guided by the experience which I have acquired, and my knowledge of the country and the people, they might if they choosed sell at least twelve thousand Bibles and Testaments yearly in Spain, but let them adopt or let any other people adopt any other principle than that on which I act and everything will miscarry. All the difficulties, as I told my friends the time I was in England, which I have had to encounter were owing to the faults and imprudencies of other people, and, I may say, still

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are owing. Two Methodist schoolmasters have lately settled at Cadiz, and some little time ago took it into their heads to speak and preach, as I am informed, against the Virgin Mary; information was instantly sent to Madrid, and the blame, or part of it, was as usual laid to me; however, I found means to clear myself, for I have powerful friends in Madrid, who are well acquainted with my views, and who interested themselves for me, otherwise I should have been sent out of the country, as I believe the two others have been or will be. I have said nothing on this point in my letters home, as people would perhaps say that I was lukewarm, whereas, on the contrary, I think of nothing but the means best adapted to promote the cause; but I am not one of those disposed to run a ship on a rock when only a little skill is necessary to keep her in the open sea.

I hope Mrs. Clarke will write shortly; tell her if she wishes for a retreat I have found one here for her and Henrietta. I have my eye on a beautiful one at fifteen pence a day. I call it a small house, though it is a paradise in its way, having a stable, courtyard, fountain, and twenty rooms. She has only to write to my address at Madrid and I shall receive the letter without fail. Henrietta had better bring with her a Spanish grammar and pocket dictionary, as not a word of English is spoken here. The house-dog—perhaps a real English bulldog would be better—likewise had better come, as it may be useful. God bless you therefore for the present, my dearest mother.

GEORGE BORROW.

Borrow had need of friends more tolerant of his idiosyncrasies than the "powerful friends" he describes to his mother, for the worthy secretary of the Bible Society was still in a critical mood:

You narrate your perilous journey to Seville, and say at the beginning of the description, "my usual wonderful good fortune accompanying us." This is a mood of speaking to which we are not accustomed—it savours, some of our friends would say, a little of the profane.

I find among my papers an interesting letter to Mrs. Clarke of this period:

TO MRS. CLARKE

SEVILLE, 10 January, 1839.

MY DEAR MADAM,—As I left England very suddenly and had many preparations to make at exceedingly short notice, I was unable to perform my wish, and I believe my promise, of writing

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to you before my departure. I took shipping at Falmouth and arrived at Cadis without any circumstance worthy of remark occurring. I am now, and have been for the last week, in Seville, the principal town of Andalusia, one of the most beautiful provinces in Spain. I proceed to Madrid within a few days, but it is my intention to return as soon as possible to these parts, and commence operations here, where up to the present moment nothing has been done towards propagating the word of God. Indeed my sole motive for visiting Madrid, and subjecting myself to a fatiguing journey through a country which I have already twice traversed, is to furnish myself with a sufficient stock of Testaments for distribution in the principal villages of Andalusia, as it is my intention to address myself chiefly to the peasantry, whom hitherto I have invariably found far more docile to instruction, and eager to acquire knowledge, than the brethren of the large towns. I intend, however, to make Seville my headquarters, and a depot for the books intended for other places. Nothing can be more delightful than the situation of this place, which stands on the eastern bank of the Guadalquivir, the largest river in Spain, with the exception of the Ebro; smiling meadows, orange-groves and gardens encompass it on every side; while far away towards the south east are descried the blue ridges and misty pinnacles of the noble chain of mountains called the Sierrania de Ronda. The streets are narrow and crooked like those of all the old Spanish and Moorish towns. Indeed in many of them, whilst standing in the middle, you can touch both sides with your hands extended. Yet the narrowness of the streets is by no means an inconvenience in this climate, especially in the summer when the sun burns with great heat and fury, but on the contrary is a very great comfort, as the hot beams are excluded, and the houses by this means kept seasonably cool. Nothing pleases me more than the manner in which the houses of Seville are built. They are, for the most part, of two stories, which surround a quadrangular court, of large or small dimensions, according to the size of the edifice—the upper story being furnished with a gallery overhanging the court, and offering an agreeable place for walking to those not disposed to go abroad. In most of the courts is a stone fountain, continually streaming with cool and delicious water, and not unfrequently at the angles orange trees are planted, which perfume the air with their fruit and blossoms. There are many magnificent edifices in Seville, especially the Cathedral and Alcazar or castle. The former is indeed a glorious pile, constructed at various periods, and so large and covering so much ground that St. Paul's, magnificent edifice as it certainly is, would look contemptible, if placed by its side. Its tower which is called La Giralda is the work of the Moors, and once formed part of a mosque, and was the place from which the Imams at morn and eve summoned the children of Ismael to their devotions with the awful and true cry "There is but one God"; stultified however by the sequence "Mahomet is the Prophet

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of God." The Alcazar is also the work of the Moors, and was the palace of their kings as long as they lorded on the banks of the Guadalquivir; it contains halls of grandeur indescribable, and which are worthy specimens of the perfection to which architecture was carried in Spain by the Moors who certainly deserve to be styled Lords of Masonry, and who perhaps were upon the whole the most extraordinary nation which has appeared upon the earth since the time of the creation.

I must however proceed no further at present in describing the remarkable objects of Seville as there are other matters which I must now touch upon, and which relate immediately to yourself. Respecting your questions as to what quarter I would advise you to direct your course, as soon as your affairs shall have been arranged to your satisfaction, I beg leave to answer that I do not think that yourself and Miss Hen. could do better than come out to Seville, for a time, where you would be far out of the reach of the malignity of your ill-wishers, and might soon become useful helpers in the cause of God. With your income you might live here with the greatest respectability, tenant one of the charming houses, which I have just described, and enjoy one of the finest climates in the world. Therefore you had better give this point your very serious consideration. I do not think that Colchester or Edinburgh would please you half so much as Seville, where you would find a few excellent and worthy English families, long established in Spain, and following with great success the pursuits of commerce.

Perhaps it would be well to invest part of your money in the purchase of some vessel trading to the Mediterranean if such extraordinary good interest, with perfect security, can be obtained, as you have stated. However, pray act with the greatest caution and endeavour thoroughly to know your people before you place confidence in any person. Should Mr. W. apply to you again, I think you may tell him that you will reconsider the matter provided he will give you one thousand pounds for your interest in your charming little estate. I have no doubt that he would comply.

The best general advice that I can give you for the present is to make the most of any species of property which you may deem it advisable to dispose of, and by no precipitate haste run the risk of incurring a loss. Let no person persuade you, whether legal adviser or not, to take any step by which you may deem that your interests will be in the slightest degree compromised, and be reserved in your communications to all respecting your ultimate intentions. I shall write to you speedily from Madrid and then I hope to have the satisfaction of hearing from you.

Pray let Hen. continue to collect as much money as possible towards affording spiritual instruction to the Spanish Gypsies. Pay a visit to dear Mrs. Riason and communicate to her my best remembrances and kindest regards and inform her at the

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same time that if she please she may subscribe in this good cause. I am shortly about to publish, on my own account, a work which I hope will prove of no slight spiritual benefit to these unhappy people.—I remain, dearest Madam, ever yours,  
G. B.

Mrs. Clarke,  
Oulton Cottage,  
Oulton,  
near Lowestoft,  
Suffolk,  
England.

On 29th July, 1839, Borrow was instructed by his Committee to return to England, but he was already on the way to Tangier, whence in September he wrote a long and interesting letter to Mr. Brandram, which was afterwards incorporated in *The Bible in Spain*. He had left Mrs. Clarke and her daughter in Seville, and they joined him at Gibraltar later. We find him *en route* for Tangier, staying two days with Mr. John M. Brackenbury, the British Consul in Cadiz, who found him a most fascinating man.

His Tangier life is fully described in *The Bible in Spain*. Here he picked up a Jewish youth, Hayim Ben Attar, who returned to Spain as his servant, and afterwards to England.

Borrow, at the end of September, was back again in Seville, in his house near the cathedral, in the Plazuela de la Pila Seca, which, when I visited Seville in the spring of the year 1913, I found had long been destroyed to make way for new buildings. Here he received the following letter from Mr. George Browne of the Bible Society:—

TO MR. BORROW

BIBLE HOUSE, Oct. 7, 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Mr. Brandram and myself being both on the eve of a long journey, I have only time to inform you that yours of the 2d ult. from Tangier, and 21st from Cadiz came to hand this morning. Before this time you have doubtless received Mr. Brandram's letter, accompanying the resolution of the Comtee., of which I apprised you, but which was delayed a few days, for the purpose of reconsideration. We are not able to suggest precisely the course you should take in regard to the books left at Madrid and elsewhere, and how far it may be absolutely necessary or not for you to visit that city again before you return. The books you speak of, as at Seville, may be sent to Gibraltar rather than to England, as well as any books you

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may deem it expedient or find it necessary to bring out of the country. As soon as your arrangements are completed we shall look for the pleasure of seeing you in this country. The haste in which I am compelled to write allows me to say no more than that my best wishes attend you, and that I am, with sincere regard, yours truly,

G. BROWNE.

I thank you for your kind remembrance of Mrs. Browne. Did I thank you for your letter to her? She feels, I assure you, very much obliged. Your description of Tangier will be another interesting "morceau" for her.

"Where is Borrow?" asked the Bible Society meanwhile of the Consuls at Seville and Cadiz, but Borrow had ceased to care. He hoped to become a successful author with his *Gypsies*; he would at any rate secure independence by marriage, which must have been already mooted. In November he and Mrs. Clarke were formally betrothed, and would have been married in Spain, but a Protestant marriage was impossible there. When preparing to leave Seville he had one of those fiery quarrels with which his life was to be studded. This time it was with an official of the city over a passport, and the official promptly locked him up for thirty hours. Hence the following letter in response to his complaint. The writer is Mr., afterward Sir George, Jerningham, then Secretary of Legation at Madrid, who, it may be mentioned, came from Costessey, four miles from Norwich. It is written from the British Legation, and is dated 23rd December, 1839:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your two letters, the one without date, the second dated the 19th November (which however ought to have been December), respecting the outrageous conduct pursued towards you at Seville by the Alcalde of the district in which you resided. I lost no time in addressing a strong representation thereon to the Spanish Minister, and I have to inform you that he has acquainted me with his having written to Seville for exact information upon the whole subject, and that he has promised a further answer to my representation as soon as his inquiries shall have been answered. In the meantime I shall not fail to follow up your case with proper activity.

Borrow was still in Seville, hard at work upon the *Gypsies*, all through the first three months of the year 1840. In April the three friends left Cadiz for London. A letter of

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this period from Mr. Brackenbury, the British Consul at Cadiz, is made clear by these facts:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

BRITISH CONSULATE, CADIZ, *January 27th, 1840.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I received on the 19th your very acceptable letter without date, and am heartily rejoiced to find that you have received satisfaction for the insult, and that the Alcalde is likely to be punished for his unjustifiable conduct. If you come to Cadiz your baggage may be landed and deposited at the gates to be shipped with yourselves wherever the steamer may go, in which case the authorities would not examine it, if you bring it into Cadiz it would be examined at the gates—or, if you were to get it examined at the Custom House at Seville and there sealed with the seal of the Customs—it might then be transhipped into the steamer or into any other vessel without being subjected to any examination. If you take your horse, the agents of the steamer ought to be apprized of your intention, that they may be prepared, which I do not think they generally are, with a suitable box.

Consuls are not authorised to unite Protestant subjects in the bonds of Holy Matrimony in popish countries—which seems a peculiar hardship, because popish priests could not, if they would—hence in Spain no Protestants can be legally married. Marriages solemnised abroad according to the law of that land wheresoever the parties may at the time be inhabitants are valid—but the law of Spain excludes their priests from performing these ceremonies where both parties are Protestants—and where one is a Papist, except a dispensation be obtained from the Pope. So you must either go to Gibraltar—or wait till you arrive in England. I have represented the hardship of such a case more than once or twice to Government. In my report upon the Consular Act, 6 GEO. IV. cap. 87—eleven years ago—I suggested that provision should be made to legalise marriages solemnised by the Consul within the Consulate, and that such marriages should be registered in the Consular Office—and that duly certified copies thereof should be equivalent to certificates of marriages registered in any church in England. These suggestions not having been acted upon, I brought the matter under the consideration of Lord John Russell (I being then in England at the time of his altering the Marriage Act), and proposed that Consuls abroad should have the power of magistrates and civil authorities at home for receiving the declarations of British subjects who might wish to enter into the marriage state—but they feared lest the introduction of such a clause, simple and efficacious as it would have been, might have endangered the fate of the Bill; and so we are as Protestants deprived of all power of being legally married in Spain.

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What sort of a horse is your hack?—What colour? What age? Would he carry me?—What his action? What his price? Because if in all these points he would suit me, perhaps you would give me the refusal of him. You will of course enquire whether your Arab may be legally exported.

All my family beg to be kindly remembered to you.—I am, my dear sir, most faithfully yours,

J. M. BRACKENBURY.

There is a young gentleman here, who is in Spain partly on account of his health—partly for literary purposes. I will give him, with your leave, a line of introduction to you whenever he may go to Seville. He is the Honourable R. Dundas Murray, brother of Lord Elibank, a Scottish nobleman.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### BORROW'S SPANISH CIRCLE

THERE are many interesting personalities that pass before us in Borrow's three separate narratives, as they may be considered, of his Spanish experiences. We would fain know more concerning the two excellent secretaries of the Bible Society—Samuel Brandram and Joseph Jowett. We merely know that the former was rector of Beckenham and was one of the Society's secretaries until his death in 1850; that the latter was rector of Silk Willoughby in Lincolnshire, and belonged to the same family as Jowett of Balliol. But there are many quaint characters in Borrow's own narrative to whom we are introduced. There is Maria Diaz, for example, his landlady in the house in the Calle de Santiago in Madrid, and her husband, Juan Lopez, also assisted Borrow in his Bible distribution. Very eloquent are Borrow's tributes to the pair in the pages of *The Bible in Spain*. "Honour to Maria Diaz, the quiet, dauntless, clever, Castilian female! I were an ingrate not to speak well of her." We get a glimpse of Maria and her husband long years afterwards—a pensioner in a Spanish almshouse revealing himself as the son of Borrow's friends. Eduardo Lopez was only eight years of age when Borrow was in Madrid, and he really adds nothing to our knowledge. Then there were those two incorrigible vagabonds—Antonio Buchini, his Greek servant with an Italian name, and Benedict Mol, the Swiss of Lucerne, who turns up in all sorts of improbable circumstances as the seeker of treasure in the Church of St. James of Compostella—only a masterly imagination could have made him so interesting. Concerning these there is nothing to supplement Borrow's own story. But we have attractive glimpses of Borrow in the frequently quoted narrative of Colonel Napier, and this is so illuminating that I venture to reproduce it at greater length than previous biographers have done. Edward Elers Napier, who was born

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in 1808, was the son of one Edward Elers of the Royal Navy. His widow married the famous Admiral Sir Charles Napier, who adopted her four children by her first husband. Edward Elers, the younger, or Edward Napier, as he came to be called, was educated at Sandhurst and entered the army, serving for some years in India. Later his regiment was ordered to Gibraltar, and it was thence that he made several sporting excursions into Spain and Morocco. Later he served in Egypt, and when, through ill-health, he retired in 1843 on half-pay, he lived for some years in Portugal. In 1854 he returned to the army and did good work in the Crimea, becoming a lieutenant-general in 1864. He died in 1870. He wrote, in addition to these *Excursions*, several other books, including *Scenes and Sports in Foreign Lands*. It was during his military career at Gibraltar that he met George Borrow at Seville, as the following extracts from his book testify. Borrow's pretension to have visited the East is characteristic—and amusing:—

1839. *Saturday 4th.*—Out early, sketching at the Alcazar. After breakfast it set in a day of rain, and I was reduced to wander about the galleries overlooking "the patio." Nothing so dreary and out of character as a rainy day in Spain. Whilst occupied in moralising over the dripping windows, I observed a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, dressed in a zamarra, leaning over the balustrades, and apparently engaged in a similar manner with myself. Community of thoughts and occupation generally tends to bring people together. From the stranger's complexion, which was fair, but with brilliant black eyes, I concluded he was not a Spaniard; in short, there was something so remarkable in his appearance that it was difficult to say to what nation he might belong. He was tall, with a commanding appearance; yet, though apparently in the flower of manhood, his hair was so deeply tinged with the winter of either age or sorrow as to be nearly snow-white. Under these circumstances, I was rather puzzled as to what language I should address him in. At last, putting a bold face on the matter, I approached him with a "Bonjour, monsieur, quel triste temps!"

"Yes, sir," replied he in the purest Parisian accent; "and it is very unusual weather here at this time of the year."

"Does 'monsieur' intend to be any time at Seville?" asked I. He replied in the affirmative. We were soon on a friendly footing, and from his varied information I was both amused and instructed. Still I became more than ever in the dark as to his nationality; I found he could speak English as fluently as French. I tried him on the Italian track; again he was perfectly at home. He had a Greek servant, to whom he gave his orders in Romanic.

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He conversed in good Castilian with "mine host"; exchanged a German salutation with an Austrian Baron, at the time an inmate of the fonda; and on mentioning to him my morning visit to Triano, which led to some remarks on the gypsies, and the probable place from whence they derived their origin, he expressed his belief that it was from Moultan, and said that, even to this day, they retained many Moultee and Hindoostanee expressions, such as "pánee" (water), "buree pánee" (the sea), etc. He was rather startled when I replied "in Hindee," but was delighted on finding I was an Indian, and entered freely, and with depth and acuteness, on the affairs of the East, most of which part of the world he had visited.

In such varied discourse did the hours pass so swiftly away that we were not a little surprised when Pépé, the "mozo" (and I verily believe all Spanish waiters are called Pépé), announced the hour of dinner; after which we took a long walk together on the banks of the river. But, on our return, I was as much as ever in ignorance as to who might be my new and pleasant acquaintance.

I took the first opportunity of questioning Antonio Baillie (Buchini) on the subject, and his answer only tended to increase my curiosity. He said that nobody knew what nation the "mysterious Unknown" belonged to, nor what were his motives for travelling. In his passport he went by the name of —, and as a British subject, but in consequence of a suspicion being entertained that he was a Russian spy, the police kept a sharp look-out over him. Spy or no spy, I found him a very agreeable companion; and it was agreed that on the following day we should visit together the ruins of Italica.

May 5.—After breakfast, the "Unknown" and myself, mounting our horses, proceeded on our expedition to the ruins of Italica. Crossing the river, and proceeding through the populous suburb of Triano, already mentioned, we went over the same extensive plain that I had traversed in going to San Lucar, but keeping a little more to the right a short ride brought us in sight of the Convent of San Isidrio, surrounded by tall cypress and waving date-trees. This once richly-endowed religious establishment is, together with the small neighbouring village of Santi Ponci, I believe, the property of the Duke of Medina Coeli, at whose expense the excavations are now carried on at the latter place, which is the ancient site of the Roman Italica.

We sat down on a fragment of the walls, and sadly recalling the splendour of those times of yore, contrasted with the desolation around us, the "Unknown" began to feel the vein of poetry creeping through his inward soul, and gave vent to it by reciting, with great emphasis and effect, and to the astonishment of the wondering peasant, who must have thought him "loco," the following well-known and beautiful lines:—

"Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower, grown,  
Matted and massed together, hillocks heap'd

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On what were chambers, arch crush'd, column strown  
In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescoes steep'd  
In subterranean damp, where the owl peep'd,  
Deeming it midnight; Temples, baths, or halls—  
Pronounce who can: for all that Learning reap'd  
From her research hath been, that these are walls."

I had been too much taken up with the scene, the verses, and the strange being who was repeating them with so much feeling, to notice the approach of one who now formed the fourth person of our party. This was a slight female figure, beautiful in the extreme, but whose tattered garments, raven hair (which fell in matted elf-locks over her naked shoulders), swarthy complexion, and flashing eyes, proclaimed to be of the wandering tribe of "gitanos." From an intuitive sense of natural politeness she stood with crossed arms, and a slight smile on her dark and handsome countenance, until my companion had ceased, and then addressed us in the usual whining tone of supplication, with "Caballeritos, una limosita! Dios se lo pagara a ustedes!" ("Gentlemen, a little charity! God will repay it to you!") The gypsy girl was so pretty, and her voice so sweet, that I involuntarily put my hand in my pocket.

"Stop!" said the "Unknown." "Do you remember what I told you about the Eastern origin of these people? You shall see I am correct. Come here, my pretty child," said he in Moultonce, "and tell me where are the rest of your tribe?"

The girl looked astounded, replied in the same tongue, but in broken language; when, taking him by the arm, she said, in Spanish: "Come, caballero; come to one who will be able to answer you;" and she led the way down amongst the ruins towards one of the dens formerly occupied by the wild beasts, and disclosed to us a set of beings scarcely less savage. The sombre walls of this gloomy abode were illumined by a fire, the smoke from which escaped through a deep fissure in the massy roof; whilst the flickering flames threw a blood-red glare on the bronzed features of a group of children, of two men, and a decrepit old hag, who appeared busily engaged in some culinary preparations.

On our entrance, the scowling glance of the males of the party, and a quick motion of the hand towards the folds of the "faja," caused in me, at least, anything but a comfortable sensation; but their hostile intentions, if ever entertained, were immediately removed by a wave of the hand from our conductress, who, leading my companion towards the sibyl, whispered something in her ear. The old crone appeared incredulous. The "Unknown" uttered one word; but that word had the effect of magic; she prostrated herself at his feet, and in an instant, from an object of suspicion he became one of worship to the whole family, to whom, on taking leave, he made a handsome present, and departed with their united blessings, to the astonishment of myself, and what looked very like terror in our Spanish guide.

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I was, as the phrase goes, dying with curiosity, and, as soon as we mounted our horses, exclaimed, "Where, in the name of goodness, did you pick up your acquaintance and the language of these extraordinary people?" "Some years ago, in Moultan," he replied. "And by what means do you possess such apparent influence over them?" But the "Unknown" had already said more than he perhaps wished on the subject. He drily replied that he had more than once owed his life to gipsies, and had reason to know them well; but this was said in a tone which precluded all further queries on my part. The subject was never again broached, and we returned in silence to the fonda. . . .

*May 7th.*—Pouring with rain all day, during which I was mostly in the society of the "Unknown." This is a most extraordinary character, and the more I see of him the more I am puzzled. He appears acquainted with everybody and everything, but apparently unknown to every one himself. Though his figure bespeaks youth—and by his own account his age does not exceed thirty—yet the snows of eighty winters could not have whitened his locks more completely than they are. But in his dark and searching eye there is an almost supernatural penetration and lustre, which, were I inclined to superstition, might induce me to set down its possessor as a second Melmoth; and in that character he often appears to me during the troubled rest I sometimes obtain through the medium of the great soother, "laudanum."

The next most interesting figure in the Borrow gallery of this period is Don Luis de Usóz y Rio, who was a good friend to Borrow during the whole of his sojourn in Spain. It was he who translated Borrow's appeal to the Spanish Prime Minister to be permitted to distribute Scio's New Testament. He watched over Borrow with brotherly solicitude, and wrote him more than one excellent letter, of which the two following from my Borrow Papers, the last written at the close of the Spanish period, are the most interesting:

TO MR. GEORGE BORROW

(Translated from the Spanish)

PIAZZA DI SPAGNA 47, ROME, 7 April, 1838.

DEAR FRIEND,—I received your letter, and thank you for the same. I know the works under the name of "Boz," about which you write, and also the *Memoirs of the Pickwick Club*, and although they seemed to me good, I have failed to appreciate properly their qualities, because much of the dramatic style and dialogue in the same are very difficult for those who know English merely from books. I made here a better acquaintance

## Borrow's Spanish Circle

than that of Mezzofanti (who knows nothing), namely, that of Prof. Michel-Angelo Lanci, already well known on account of his work, *La sacra scrittura illustrata con monumenti fenicio-egiziani*, etc., etc. (The Scriptures, illustrated with Phœnician-Assyrian and Egyptian monuments), which I am reading at present, and find very profound and interesting, and more particularly very original. He has written and presented me a book, *Esposizione dei versetti del Giobbe intorno al cavallo* (Explanation of verses of Job about a horse), and in these and other works he proves himself to be a great philologist and Oriental scholar. I meet him almost daily, and I assure you that he seems to me to know everything he treats thoroughly, and not like Gayangos or Calderon, etc., etc. His philosophic works have created a great stir here, and they do not please much the friars here; but as here they are not like the police barbarians there, they do not forbid it, as they cannot. Lanci is well known in Russia and in Germany, and when I bring his works there, and you are there and have not read them, you will read them and judge for yourself.

Wishing you well, and always at your service, I remain, always  
yours,  
LUIS DE USOZ Y RIO.

TO MR. GEORGE BORROW

(Translated from the Spanish)

NAPLES, 28 August, 1839.

DEAR FRIEND,—I received your letter of the 28 July written from Sevilla, and I am waiting for that which you promise me from Tangier.

I am glad that you liked Sevilla, and I am still more glad of the successful shipment of the beloved book. In distributing it, you are rendering the greatest service that generous foreigners (I mean Englishmen) can render to the real freedom and enlightenment in Spain, and any Spaniard who is at heart a gentleman must be grateful for this service to the Society and to its agent. In my opinion, if Spain had maintained the customs, character, and opinions that it had three centuries ago, it ought to have maintained also unity in religious opinions: but that at present the circumstances have changed, and the moral character and the advancement of my unfortunate country would not lose anything in its purification and progress by (the grant of) religious liberty.

You are saying that I acted very light-mindedly in judging Mezzofanti without speaking to him. You know that the other time when I was in Italy I had dealings and spoke with him, and that I said to you that he had a great facility for speaking languages, but that otherwise he was no good. Because I have seen him several times in the Papal chapels with a certain air

## The Life of George Borrow

of an ass and certain grimaces of a blockhead that cannot happen to a man of talent. I am told, moreover, that he is a spy, and that for that reason he was given the hat. I know, moreover, that he has not written anything at all. For that reason I do not wish to take the trouble of seeing him.

As regards Lanci, I am not saying anything except that I am waiting until you have read his work without passion, and that if my books have arrived at Madrid, you can ask my brother in Santiago.

You are judging of him and of Pahlín in the way you reproach me with judging Mezzofanti; I thank you, and I wish for the dedication Gabricote; and I also wish for your return to Madrid, so that in going to Toledo you would get a copy of Aristophanes with the order that will be given to you by my brother, who has got it.

If for the Gabricote or other work you require my clumsy pen, write to Florence and send me a rough copy of what is to be done, in English or in Spanish, and I will supply the finished work. From Florence I intend to go to London, and I should be obliged if you would give me letters and instructions that would be of use to me in literary matters, but you must know that my want of knowledge of *speaking* English makes it necessary that the Englishmen who speak to me should know Spanish, French, or Italian.

As regards robberies, of which you accuse Southern people, from the literatures of the North, do you think that the robberies committed by the Northerners from the Southern literature would be left behind? Erunt vitia donec homines.—Always yours,  
ELEUTHEROS.

Yet another acquaintance of these Spanish days was Baron Taylor—Isidore Justin Séverin Taylor, to give him his full name—who had a career of wandering achievement, with Government pay, that must have appealed to Borrow. Although his father was an Englishman he became a naturalised Frenchman, and he was for a time in the service of the French Government as Director of the Théâtre Français, when he had no little share in the production of the dramas of Victor Hugo and Dumas. Later he was instrumental in bringing the Luxor obelisk from Egypt to Paris. He wrote books upon his travels in Spain, Portugal and Morocco. He wandered all over Europe in search of art treasures for the French Government, and may very well have met Borrow again and again. Borrow tells us that he had met Taylor in France, in Russia, and in Ireland, before he met him in Andalusia, collecting pictures for the French Government. Borrow's description of their meetings is inimitable:—

## Borrow's Spanish Circle

Whenever he describes me, whether in the street or the desert, the brilliant hall or amongst Bedouin *Asimas*, at Novogorod or Stambul, he flings up his arms and exclaims, "*O ciel!* I have again the felicity of seeing my cherished and most respectable Borrow."

The last and most distinguished of Borrow's colleagues while in Spain was George Villiers, fourth Earl of Clarendon, whom we judge to have been in private life one of the most lovable men of his epoch. George Villiers was born in London in 1800, and was the grandson of the first Earl, Thomas Villiers, who received his title when holding office in Lord North's administration, but is best known from his association in diplomacy with Frederick the Great. His grandson was born, as it were, into diplomacy, and at twenty years of age was an *attaché* to the British Embassy in St. Petersburg. Later he was associated with Sir John Bowring in negotiating a commercial treaty with France. In August, 1833, he was sent as British Minister—"envoy extraordinary" he was called—to Madrid, and he had been two years in that seething-pot of Spanish affairs, with Christinos and Carlists at one another's throats, when Borrow arrived in the Peninsula. His influence was the greater with a succession of Spanish Prime Ministers in that in 1838 he had been largely instrumental in negotiating the quadruple alliance between England, France, Spain, and Portugal. In March, 1839—exactly a year before Borrow took his departure—he resigned his position at Madrid, having then for some months exchanged the title of Sir George Villiers for that of Earl of Clarendon through the death of his uncle; Borrow thereafter having to launch his various complaints and grievances at his successor, Mr.—afterwards Sir George—Jerningham, who, it has been noted, had his home in Norfolk, at Costessey, four miles from Norwich. Villiers returned to England with a great reputation, although his Spanish policy was attacked in the House of Lords. In that same year, 1839, he joined Lord Melbourne's administration as Lord Privy Seal, O'Connell at the time declaring that he ought to be made Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, so sympathetic was he towards concession and conciliation in that then feverishly excited country. This office actually came to him in 1847, and he was Lord-Lieutenant through that dark period of Ireland's history,

## The Life of George Borrow

including the Famine, the Young Ireland rebellion, and the Smith O'Brien rising. He pleased no one in Ireland. No English statesman could ever have done so under such ideals of government as England would have tolerated then, and for long years afterwards. The Whigs defended him, the Tories abused him, in their respective organs. He left Ireland in 1853 and was more than once mentioned as possible Prime Minister in the ensuing years. He was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Lord Aberdeen's administration during the Crimean War, and he held the same office under Lord Palmerston, again under Lord John Russell in 1865, and under Mr. Gladstone in 1868. He might easily have become Prime Minister. Greville in his *Diary* writes of Prince Albert's desire that he should succeed Lord John Russell, but Clarendon said that no power on earth would make him take that position. He said he could not speak, and had not had parliamentary experience enough. He died in 1870, leaving a reputation as a skilful diplomatist and a disinterested politician, if not that of a great statesman. He had twice refused the Governor-Generalship of India, and three times a marquissate.

Sir George Villiers seems to have been very courteous to Borrow during the whole of the time they were together in Spain. It would have been easy for him to have been quite otherwise. Borrow's Bible mission synchronised with a very delicate diplomatic mission of his own, and in a measure clashed with it. The government of Spain was at the time fighting the ultra-clericals. Physical and moral strife were rife in the land. Neither Royalists nor Carlists could be expected to sympathise with Borrow's schemes, which were fundamentally to attack their Church. But Villiers was at all times friendly, and, as far as he could be, helpful. Borrow seems to have had ready access to him, and he answered his many letters. He gave Borrow an opportunity of an interview with the formidable Prime Minister Mendizábal, and he interviewed another minister and persuaded him to permit Borrow to print and circulate his Bibles. He intervened successfully to release Borrow from his Madrid prison. But Villiers could not have had any sympathy with Borrow other than as a British subject to be protected on the Roman citizen principle. We do not suppose that when *The Bible in Spain* appeared he was one

## Borrow's Spanish Circle

of those who were captivated by its extraordinary qualities. When Borrow crossed his path in later life he received no special consideration, such as would be given very promptly in our day by a Cabinet minister to a man of letters of like distinction. We find him on one occasion writing to the ex-minister, now Lord Clarendon, asking his help for a consulship. Clarendon replied kindly enough, but sheltered himself behind the statement that the Prime Minister was overwhelmed with applications for patronage. Yet Clarendon, who held many high offices in the following years, might have helped if he had cared to do so. Some years later—in 1847—there was further correspondence when Borrow desired to become a Magistrate of Suffolk. Here again Clarendon wrote three courteous letters, and appears to have done his best in an unenthusiastic way. But nothing came of it all.

## CHAPTER XIX

### MARY BORROW

AMONG the many Borrow manuscripts in my possession I find a page of unusual pathos. It is the inscription that Borrow wrote for his wife's tomb, and it is in the tremulous handwriting of a man weighed down by the one incomparable tragedy of life's pilgrimage:

*Sacred to the Memory of Mary Borrow,  
the Beloved and Affectionate Wife of  
George Borrow, Esquire, who departed  
this Life on the 30th Jan. 1869.*

GEORGE BORROW.

The death of his wife saddened Borrow, and assisted to transform him into the unamiable creature of Norfolk tradition. But it is well to bear in mind, when we are considering Borrow on his domestic and personal side, that he was unquestionably a good and devoted husband throughout his married life of twenty-nine years. It was in the year 1832 that Borrow and his wife first met. He was twenty-nine; she was a widow of thirty-eight. She was undeniably very intelligent, and was keenly sympathetic to the young vagabond of wonderful adventures on the highways of England, now so ambitious for future adventure in distant lands. Her maiden name was Mary Skepper. She was one of the two children of Edmund Skepper and his wife Anne, who lived at Oulton Hall in Suffolk, whither they had removed from Beccles in 1805. Mary's brother inherited the Oulton Hall estate of three hundred acres, and she had a mortgage, the interest of which yielded £450 per annum. In July, 1817, Mary married, at Oulton Church, Henry Clarke, a lieutenant in the Navy, who died eight months later of consumption. Two months after his death their child Henrietta Mary, the "Hen." who was Borrow's life companion, was born. There is a letter among my Borrow

## Mary Borrow

Papers addressed to the widow by her husband's father at this time. It is dated 17th June, 1818, and runs as follows:

I read your very kind, affectionate, and respectful Letter of the 15th Inst. with Feelings of Satisfaction and thankfulness—thankful that God has mercifully given you so pleasing a Pledge of the Love of my late dear, but lamented son, and I most sincerely hope and trust that dear little Henrietta will live to be the Joy and Consolation of your Life: and satisfied I am that you are what I always esteemed you to be, *one* of the best of Women; God grant! that you may be, as I am sure you deserve to be *one* of the happiest—His Ways of Providence are past finding out; to you—they seem indeed to have been truly afflictive: but we cannot possibly say that they are really so; we cannot doubt His Wisdom nor ought we to distrust His Goodness, let us avow, then, where we have not the Power of fathoming—viz. the dispensations of God; in His good time He will show us, perhaps, that every painful Event which has happened was abundantly for the best—I am truly glad to hear that you and the sweet Babe, my little grand Daughter, are doing so well, and I hope I shall have the pleasure shortly of seeing you either at Oulton or Sisland. I am sorry to add that neither Poor L. nor myself are well.—Louisa and my Family join me in kind love to you, and in best regards to your worthy Father, Mother, and Brother.

Mary Skepper was certainly a bright, intelligent girl, as I gather from a manuscript poem before me written to a friend on the eve of leaving school. As a widow, living at first with her parents at Oulton Hall, and later with her little daughter in the neighbouring cottage, she would seem to have busied herself with all kinds of philanthropies, and she was clearly in sympathy with the religious enthusiasms of certain neighbouring families of Evangelical persuasion, particularly the Gurneys and the Cunninghams. The Rev. Francis Cunningham was rector of Pakefield, near Lowestoft from 1814 to 1830. He married Richenda, sister of the distinguished Joseph John Gurney and of Elizabeth Fry, in 1816. In 1830 he became vicar of St. Margaret's, Lowestoft. His brother, John William Cunningham, was vicar of Harrow, and married a Verney of the famous Buckinghamshire family. This John William Cunningham was a great light of the Evangelical Churches of his time, and was for many years editor of *The Christian Observer*. His daughter Mary Richenda married Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, the well-known judge, and the brother of Sir Leslie Stephen.

## The Life of George Borrow

But to return to Francis Cunningham, whose acquaintance with Borrow was brought about through Mrs. Clarke. Cunningham was a great supporter of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and was the founder of the Paris branch. It was speedily revealed to him that Borrow's linguistic abilities could be utilised by the Society, and he secured the co-operation of his brother-in-law, Joseph John Gurney, in an effort to find Borrow work in connection with the Society.

We do not meet Mary Clarke again until 1834, when we find a letter from her to Borrow addressed to St. Petersburg, in which she notifies to him that he has been "mentioned at many of the Bible Meetings this year," adding that "dear Mr. Cunningham" had spoken so nicely of him at an Oulton gathering. "As I am not afraid of making you proud," she continues, "I will tell you one of his remarks. He mentioned you as one of the most extraordinary and interesting individuals of the present day." Henceforth clearly Mary Clarke corresponded regularly with Borrow, and one or two extracts from her letters are given by Dr. Knapp. Joseph Jowett of the Bible Society forwarded Borrow's letters from Russia to Cunningham, who handed them to Mrs. Clarke and her parents. Borrow had proposed to continue his mission by leaving Russia for China, but this Mary Clarke opposed:

I must tell you that your letter chilled me when I read your intention of going as a Missionary or Agent, with the Manchu Scriptures in your hand, to the Tartars, that land of incalculable dangers.

In 1835 Borrow was back in England at Norwich with his mother, and on a visit to Mary Clarke and the Skeppers at Oulton. Mrs. Skepper died just before his arrival in England—that is, in September, 1835—while her husband died in February, 1836. Her only brother died in the following year.

Thus we see Mary Clarke, aged forty-three, left to fight the world with her daughter, aged nineteen, and not only to fight the world but her own family, particularly her brother's widow, owing to certain ambiguities in her father's will. It was these legal quarrels that led Mary Clarke and her daughter to set sail for Spain, where Mary

## Mary Borrow

had had the indefatigable and sympathetic correspondent during the previous year of trouble. Borrow and Mary Clarke met, as we have seen, at Seville and there, at a later period, they became "engaged." Mrs. Clarke and her daughter Henrietta sailed for Spain in the *Royal Tar*, leaving London for Cadiz in June, 1839. Much keen correspondence between Borrow and Mrs. Clarke had passed before the final decision to visit Spain. His mother was one of the few people who knew of Mrs. Clarke's journey to Seville, and must have understood, as mothers do, what was pending, although her son did not. When the engagement is announced to her—in November, 1839—she writes to Mary Clarke a kindly, affectionate letter:

I shall now resign him to your care, and may you love and cherish him as much as I have done. I hope and trust that each will try to make the other happy.

There is no reason whatever to accept the suggestion that has been made that Borrow married for money. And this because he had said in one of his letters, "It is better to suffer the halter than the yoke," the kind of thing that a man might easily say on the eve of making a proposal which he was not sure would be accepted. Nor can a casual remark of Borrow's—"marriage is by far the best way of getting possession of an estate"—be counted as conclusive. That Borrow was all his life devoted to his wife I think is proved by his many letters to her that are given in this volume. Borrow's further tribute to his wife and step-daughter in *Wild Wales* is well known:

Of my wife I will merely say that she is a perfect paragon of wives, can make puddings and sweets and treacle posset, and is the best woman of business in Eastern Anglia. Of my step-daughter—for such she is, though I generally call her daughter, and with good reason, seeing that she has always shown herself a daughter to me—that she has all kinds of good qualities, and several accomplishments, knowing something of conchology, more of botany, drawing capitally in the Dutch style, and playing remarkably well on the guitar—not the trumpery German thing so called, but the real Spanish guitar.

Borrow belonged to the type of men who would never marry did not some woman mercifully take them in hand. Mrs. Clarke, when she set out for Spain, had doubtless

## The Life of George Borrow

determined to marry Borrow. It is clear that he had no idea of marrying her. Yet he was certainly "engaged," as we learn from a letter to Mr. Brackenbury, when he wrote a letter from Seville to Mr. Brandram, dated 18th March, in which he said: "I wish very much to spend the remaining years of my life in the northern parts of China, as I think I have a call to those regions. . . . I hope yet to die in the cause of my Redeemer." Surely never did man take so curious a view of the responsibilities of marriage. Possibly here also Borrow was adapting himself to the language of the Bible Society. He must have known that his proposal would be declined—as it was.

Very soon after the engagement Borrow experienced his third term of imprisonment in Spain, this time, however, only for thirty hours, and all because he had asked the Alcalde, or mayor of the district in which he lived, for his passport, and had quarrelled with his worship over the matter. Borrow gave up the months of this winter of 1839 rather to writing his first important book, *The Gypsies of Spain*, than to the concerns of the Bible Society, which fidgeted exceedingly, no doubt imaging heavy bills for expenses, with no corresponding reports of the usual character to be read out at meetings. Finally Borrow, with Mrs. Clarke and her daughter, sailed from Cadiz on the 3rd April, 1840, as we have already related. He had with him his Jewish servant, Hayim Ben Attar, and his Arabian horse, Sidi Habismilk, both of which were to astonish the natives of the Suffolk broads. The party reached London on 16th April and stayed at the Spread Eagle Inn, Gracechurch Street. The marriage took place at St. Peter's Church, Cornhill, on 23rd April, 1840.

There are only two letters from Mrs. Borrow to her husband extant. They were written in the Hereford Square days between the years 1860 and 1869—the last year of Mrs. Borrow's life. The pair had been married some twenty-five years at least, and it is made clear by those letters alone that at the end of this period they were still a most happily assorted couple. Mrs. Borrow must have gone to Brighton for her health on two separate occasions, each time accompanied by her daughter. Borrow, who had enjoyed many a pleasant ramble on his own account, as we shall see—rambles which extended as far away as Constantinople—is

## Mary Borrow

"keeping house" in Hereford Square, Brompton, the while. It will be noted that Mrs. Borrow signed herself "Carreta," the pet name that her husband always gave her. It has been suggested that as "carreta" means a Spanish dray-cart, "carita," "my dear," was probably meant. But, careless as was the famous word-master over the spelling of words in the tongues that he never really mastered scientifically, he could scarcely have made so obvious a blunder as this, and there must have been some particular experience in the lives of husband and wife that led to the playful designation.<sup>1</sup> Here are the two letters:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

GRENVILLE PLACE, BRIGHTON, SUSSEX.

MY DARLING HUSBAND,—I am thankful to say that I arrived here quite safe on Saturday, and on Wednesday I hope to see you at home. We may not be home before the evening about six o'clock, sooner or later, so do not be anxious, as we shall be careful. We took tea with the Edwards at six o'clock the day I came; they are a very kind, nice family. You must take a walk when we come home, but remember now we have a young servant, and do not leave the house for very long together. The air here is very fresh, and much cooler than in London, and I hope after the five days' change I shall be benefited, but I wish to come home on Wednesday. See to all the doors and windows of a night, and let Jane keep up the chain, and lock the back door by the hop plant before it gets dark. Our love to Lady Soame. —And with our best love to you, believe me, your own

CARRETA.

*Sunday morning, 10 o'clock.*

If I do not hear from you I shall conclude all is well, and you may do the same with regard to us. Have the tea ready a little before six on Wednesday. Henrietta is wonderfully improved by the change, and sends dear and best love to you.

<sup>1</sup> The following suggestion has, however, been made to me by a friend of Henrietta MacOubrey, *née* Clarke:

"I think Borrow intended 'Carreta' for 'dearest.' It is impossible to think that he would call his wife a 'cart.' Perhaps he intended 'Carreta' *à* 'Querida.' Probably their pronunciation was not Castilian, and they spelled the word as they pronounced it. In speaking of her to 'Hen.' Borrow always called her 'Mamma.' Mrs. MacOubrey took a great fancy to me because she said I was like 'Mamma.' She meant in character, not in person."

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TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

33 GRENVILLE PLACE, BRIGHTON, SUSSEX.

*Thursday morning.*

MY DEAR HUSBAND,—As it is raining again this morning I write a few lines to you. I cannot think that we have quite so much rain as you have at Brompton, for I was out *twice* yesterday an hour in the morning in a Bath chair, and a little walk in the evening on the Marine Parade, and I have been out little or much every day, and hope I feel a little better. Our dear Henrietta likewise says that she feels the better for the air and change. As we are here I think we had better remain till Tuesday next, when the fortnight will be up, but I fear you feel very lonely. I hope you get out when you can, and that you take care of your health. I hope Ellen continues to attend to yr. comfort, and that when she gives orders to Mrs. Harvey or the Butcher that she shews you what they send. I shall want the stair carpets down, and the drawing-room *nice*—blinds and shutters closed to prevent the sun, also bed-rooms prepared, with well *aired* sheets and counterpane *by next Tuesday*. I suppose we shall get to Hereford Square perhaps about five o'clock, but I shall write again. You had better dine at yr. usual time, and as we shall get a dinner here we shall want only tea.

Henrietta's kindest dear love and mine, remaining yr. true and affectionate wife.

CARRETA.

No reader can peruse the following pages without recognising the true affection for his wife that is transparent in Borrow's letters to her. Arthur Dalrymple's remark that he had frequently seen Borrow and his wife travelling—

He stalking along with a huge cloak wrapped round him in all weathers, and she trudging behind him like an Indian squaw, with a carpet bag, or bundle, or small portmanteau in her arms, and endeavouring under difficulty to keep up with his enormous strides—

is clearly a travesty. "Mrs. Borrow was devoted to her husband, and looked after business matters; and he always treated her with exceeding kindness," is the verdict of Miss Elizabeth Jay, who was frequently privileged to visit the husband and wife at Oulton.

## CHAPTER XX

### "THE CHILDREN OF THE OPEN AIR"

BEHOLD George Borrow, then, in a comfortable home on the banks of Oulton Broad—a family man. His mother—sensible woman—declines her son's invitation to live with the newly-married pair. She remains in the cottage at Norwich where her husband died. The Borrowes were married in April, 1840, by May they had settled at Oulton. It was a pleasantly secluded estate, and Borrow's wife had £450 a year. He had, a month before his marriage, written to Mr. Brandram to say that he had a work nearly ready for publication, and "two others in a state of forwardness." The title of the first of these books he enclosed in his letter. It was *The Zincali: Or an Account of the Gypsies of Spain*. Mr. Samuel Smiles, in his history of the House of Murray—*A Publisher and his Friends*—thus relates the circumstances of its publication:—

In November 1840 a tall, athletic gentleman in black called upon Mr. Murray offering a MS. for perusal and publication. . . . Mr. Murray could not fail to be taken at first sight with this extraordinary man. He had a splendid physique, standing six feet two in his stockings, and he had brains as well as muscles, as his works sufficiently show. The book now submitted was of a very uncommon character, and neither the author nor the publisher were very sanguine about its success. Mr. Murray agreed, after perusal, to print and publish 750 copies of *The Gypsies in Spain*, and divide the profits with the author.

It was at the suggestion of Richard Ford, then the greatest living English authority on Spain, that Mr. Murray published the book. It did not really commence to sell until *The Bible in Spain* came a year or so later to bring the author reputation. From November, 1840, to June, 1841, only three hundred copies had been sold in spite of friendly reviews in some half-dozen journals, including *The Athenæum* and *The Literary Gazette*. The first edition, it may be mentioned, contained on its title-page a description of the author as

## The Life of George Borrow

"late agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Spain." There is very marked compression in the edition now in circulation, and a perusal of the first edition reveals many interesting features that deserve to be restored for the benefit of the curious. But nothing can make *The Zincali* a great piece of literature. It was summarised by the *Edinburgh Review* at the time as "a hotch-potch of the jockey, trumper, philologist, and missionary." That description, which was not intended to be as flattering as it sounds to-day, appears more to apply to *The Bible in Spain*. But *The Zincali* is too confused, too ill-arranged a book to rank with Borrow's four great works. There are passages in it, indeed, so eloquent, so romantic, that no lover of Borrow's writings can afford to neglect them. But this was not the book that gypsy-loving Borrow, with the temperament of a Romany, should have written, or could have written had he not been obsessed by the "science" of his subject. His real work in gypsydom was to appear later in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*. For Borrow was not a man of science—a philologist, a folk-lorist of the first order.

No one, indeed, who had read only *The Zincali* among Borrow's works could see in it any suspicion of the writer who was for all time to throw a glamour over the gypsy, to make the "children of the open air" a veritable cult, to earn for him the title of "the walking lord of gypsy lore," and to lay the foundations of an admirable succession of books both in fact and fiction—but not one as great as his own. It is clear that the city of Seville, with sarcastic letters from Bible Society secretaries on one side, and some manner of love romance on the other, was not so good a place for an author to produce a real book as Oulton was to become. Richard Ford's judgment was sound when he said with quite wonderful prescience:

How I wish you had given us more about yourself, instead of the extracts from those blunder-headed old Spaniards, who knew nothing about gypsies! I shall give you the *rap*, on that, and a hint to publish your whole adventures for the last twenty years.<sup>1</sup>

Henceforth Borrow was to write about himself and to

<sup>1</sup> Knapp's *Life*, vol. I. p. 378.

## "The Children of the Open Air"

become a great author in consequence. For in writing about himself as in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* he was to write exactly as he felt about the gypsies, and to throw over them the glamour of his own point of view, the view of a man who loved the broad highway and those who sojourned upon it. In *The Gypsies of Spain* we have a conventional estimate of the gypsies. "There can be no doubt that they are human beings and have immortal souls," he says, even as if he were writing a letter to the Bible Society. All his anecdotes about the gypsies are unfavourable to them, suggestive only of them as knaves and cheats. From these pictures it is a far cry to the creation of Jasper Petulengro and Isopel Berners. The most noteworthy figure in *The Zincali* is the gypsy soldier of Valdepenas, an unholy rascal. "To lie, to steal, to shed human blood"—these are the most marked characteristics with which Borrow endows the gypsies of Spain. "Abject and vile as they have ever been, the gitános have nevertheless found admirers in Spain," says the author who came to be popularly recognised as the most enthusiastic admirer of the gypsies in Spain and elsewhere. Read to-day by the lover of Borrow's other books *The Zincali* will be pronounced a readable collection of anecdotes, interspersed with much dull matter, with here and there a piece of admirable writing. But the book would scarcely have lived had it not been followed by four works of so fine an individuality. Well might Ford ask Borrow for more about himself and less of the extracts from "blunder-headed old Spaniards." When Borrow came to write about himself he revealed his real kindness for the gypsy folk. He gave us Jasper Petulengro and the incomparable description of "the wind on the heath." He kindled the imagination of men, proclaimed the joys of vagabondage in a manner that thrilled many hearts. He had some predecessors and many successors, but "none could then, or can ever again," says the biographer of a later Rye, "see or hear of Romanies without thinking of Borrow." In her biography of one of these successors in gypsy lore, Charles Godfrey Leland, Mrs. Pennell discusses the probability that Borrow and Leland met in the British Museum. That is admitted in a letter from Leland to Borrow in my possession. To this letter Borrow made no reply. It was wrong of him. But he was then—in 1873—a prematurely

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old man, worn out and saddened by neglect and a sense of literary failure. For this and for the other vagaries of those latter years Borrow will not be judged harshly by those who read his story here. Nothing could be more courteous than Borrow's one letter to Leland, written in the failing handwriting—once so excellent—of the last sad decade of his life:

22 HEREFORD SQUARE, BROMPTON, Nov. 2, 1871.

SIR,—I have received your letter and am gratified by the desire you express to make my acquaintance. Whenever you please to come I shall be happy to see you.—Yours truly,  
GEORGE BORROW.

The meeting did not, through Leland's absence from London, then take place. Two years later it was another story. The failing powers were more noteworthy. Borrow was by this time dead to the world, as the documents before me abundantly testify. It is not, therefore, necessary to assume, as Leland's friends have done, that Borrow never replied because he was on the eve of publishing a book of his own about the gypsies.

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

LANGHAM HOTEL, PORTLAND PLACE, March 31st, 1873.

DEAR SIR,—I sincerely trust that the limited extent of our acquaintanceship will not cause this note to seem to you too presuming. *Breviter*, I have thrown the results of my observations among English gypsies into a very unpretending little volume consisting almost entirely of facts gathered from the Romany, without any theory. As I owe all my interest in the subject to your writings, and as I am sincerely grateful to you for the impulse which they gave me, I should like very much to dedicate my book to you. Of course if your kindness permits I shall submit the proofs to you, that you may judge whether the work deserves the honour. I should have sent you the MS., but not long after our meeting at the British Museum I left for Egypt, whence I have very recently returned, to find my publisher clamorous for the promised copy.

It is *not*—God knows—a mean and selfish desire to help my book by giving it the authority of your name, which induces this request. But I am earnestly desirous for my conscience' sake to publish nothing in the Romany which shall not be true and sensible, even as all that you have written is true and sensible. Therefore, *should* you take the pains to glance over my proof, I

## “The Children of the Open Air”

should be grateful if you would signify to me any differences of opinion should there be ground for any. Dr. A. F. Pott in his *Zigeuner* (vol. ii. p. 224), intimates very decidedly that you took the word *shaster* (Exhastra de Moyses) from Sanskrit and put it into Romany; declaring that it would be very important if *shaster* were Romany. I mention in my book that English gypsies call the New Testament (also any MS.) a *shaster*, and that a betting-book on a racecourse is called a *shaster* “because it is written.” I do not pretend in my book to such deep Romany as you have achieved—all that I claim is to have collected certain words, facts, phrases, etc., out of the Romany of the roads—corrupt as it is—as I have found it to-day. I deal only with the gypsy of the *Decadence*. With renewed apology for intrusion should it seem such, I remain, yours very respectfully,

CHARLES G. LELAND.

Francis Hindes Groome remarked when reviewing Borrow's *Word Book* in 1874,<sup>1</sup> that when *The Gypsies of Spain* was published in 1841 “there were not two educated men in England who possessed the slightest knowledge of Romany.” In the intervening thirty-three years all this was changed. There was an army of gypsy scholars or scholar gypsies of whom Leland was one, Hindes Groome another, and Professor E. H. Palmer a third, to say nothing of many scholars and students of Romany in other lands. Not one of them seemed when Borrow published his *Word Book of the Romany* to see that he was the only man of genius among them. They only saw that he was an inferior philologist to them all. And so Borrow, who prided himself on things that he could do indifferently quite as much as upon things that he could do well, suffered once again, as he was so often doomed to suffer, for the lack of appreciation which was all in all to him, and his career went out in a veritable blizzard. He published nothing after his *Romano Lavo-Lil* appeared in 1874. He was then indeed a broken and a bitter man, with no further interest in life. Dedications of books to him interested him not at all. In any other mood, or a few years earlier, Leland's book, *The English Gypsies*, would have gladdened his heart. In his preface Leland expresses “the highest respect for the labours of Mr. George Borrow in this field,” he quotes Borrow continually and with sympathy, and renders him honour as a philologist that has usually been withheld. “To Mr. Borrow is due

<sup>1</sup> *The Academy*, 13th June, 1874.

## The Life of George Borrow

the discovery that the word *jockey* is of gypsy origin and derived from *chuckiri*, which means a whip," and he credits Borrow with the discovery of the origin of "tanner" for sixpence; he vindicates him as against Dr. A. F. Pott—a prince among students of gypsydom—of being the first to discover that the English gypsies call the Bible the *shaster*. But there is a wealth of scientific detail in Leland's books that is not to be found in Borrow's, as also there is in Francis Hindes Groome's works. What had Borrow to do with science? He could not even give the word "Rúmani" its accent, and called it "Romany." He "quietly appropriated," says Groome, "Bright's Spanish gypsy words for his own work, mistakes and all, without one word of recognition. I think one has the ancient impostor there." "His knowledge of the strange history of the gypsies was very elementary, of their manners almost more so, and of their folk-lore practically *nil*," says Groome elsewhere. Yet Mr. Hindes Groome readily acknowledges that Borrow is above all writers on the gypsies. "He communicates a subtle insight into gypsydom"—that is the very essence of the matter. Controversy will continue in the future as in the present as to whether the gypsies are all that Borrow thought them. Perhaps "corruption has crept in among them" as it did with the prize-fighters. They have intermarried with the gorgios, thrown over their ancient customs, lost all their picturesque qualities, it may be. But Borrow has preserved in literature for all time, as not one of the philologists and folk-lore students has done, a remarkable type of people. But this is not to be found in his first original work, *The Zincali*, nor in his last, *The Romano Lavo-Lil*. This glamour is to be found in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*, to which books we shall come in due course. Here we need only refer to the fact that Borrow had loved the gypsies all his life—from his boyish meeting with Petulengro until in advancing years the prototype of that wonderful creation of his imagination—for this the Petulengro of *Lavengro* undoubtedly was—came to visit him at Oulton. Well might Leland call him "the Nestor of Gypsydom."

## CHAPTER XXI

### "THE BIBLE IN SPAIN"

IN an admirable appreciation of our author, the one in which he gives the oft-quoted eulogy concerning him as "the delightful, the bewitching, the never-sufficiently-to-be-praised George Borrow," Mr. Birrell records the solace that may be found by small boys in the ambiguities of a title-page, or at least might have been found in it in his youth and in mine. In those days in certain Puritan circles a very strong line was drawn between what was known as Sunday reading, and reading that might be permitted on week-days. The Sunday book must have a religious flavour. There were magazines with that particular flavour, every story in them having a pious moral withal. Very closely watched and scrutinised was the reading of young people in those days and in those circles. Mr. Birrell, doubtless, speaks from autobiographical memories when he tells of a small boy with whose friends *The Bible in Spain* passed muster on the strength of its title-page. For Mr. Birrell is the son of a venerated Nonconformist minister; and perhaps he, or at least those who were of his household, had this religious idiosyncrasy. It may be that the distinction which pervaded the evangelical circles of Mr. Birrell's youth as to what were Sunday books, as distinct from books to be read on week-days, has disappeared. In any case think of the advantage of the boy of that generation who was able to handle a book with so unexceptionable a title as *The Bible in Spain*. His elders would succumb at once, particularly if the boy had the good sense to call their attention to the sub-title—"The Journeys, Adventures, and Imprisonments of an Englishman in an Attempt to Circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula." Nothing could be said by the most devout of seniors against so prepossessing a title-page. But what of the boy who had thus passed the censorship? What a revelation of adventure

## The Life of George Borrow

was open to him. Perhaps he would skip the "preachy" parts in which Borrow was doubtless sincere, although the sincerity has so uncertain a ring to-day. Here are five passages, for example, which do not seem to belong to the book:

In whatever part of the world I, a poor wanderer in the Gospel's cause, may chance to be

very possibly the fate of St. Stephen might overtake me; but does the man deserve the name of a follower of Christ who would shrink from danger of any kind in the cause of Him whom he calls his Master? "He who loses his life for my sake shall find it," are words which the Lord Himself uttered. Those words were fraught with consolation to me, as they doubtless are to every one engaged in propagating the Gospel, in sincerity of heart, in savage and barbarian lands.

Unhappy land! not until the pure light of the Gospel has illumined thee, wilt thou learn that the greatest of all gifts is charity!

and I thought that to convey the Gospel to a place so wild and remote might perhaps be considered an acceptable pilgrimage in the eyes of my Maker. True it is that but one copy remained of those which I had brought with me on this last journey; but this reflection, far from discouraging me in my projected enterprise, produced the contrary effect, as I called to mind that, ever since the Lord revealed Himself to man, it has seemed good to Him to accomplish the greatest ends by apparently the most insufficient means; and I reflected that this one copy might serve as an instrument for more good than the four thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine copies of the edition of Madrid.

I shall not detain the course of my narrative with reflections as to the state of a Church which, though it pretends to be founded on scripture, would yet keep the light of scripture from all mankind, if possible. But Rome is fully aware that she is not a Christian Church, and having no desire to become so, she acts prudently in keeping from the eyes of her followers the page which would reveal to them the truths of Christianity.

All this does not ring quite true, and in any case it is too much on the lines of "Sunday reading" to please the small boy, who must, however, have found a thousand things in that volume that were to his taste—some of the wildest

## "The Bible in Spain"

adventures, hairbreadth escapes, extraordinary meetings again and again with unique people—with Benedict Mol, for example, who was always seeking for treasure. Gypsies, bull-fighters, quaint and queer characters of every kind, come before us in rapid succession. Rarely, surely, have so many adventures been crowded into the same number of pages. Only when Borrow remembers, as he has to do occasionally, that he is an agent of the Bible Society does the book lose its vigour and its charm. We have already pointed out that the foundations of the volume were contained in certain letters written by Borrow during his five years in Spain to the secretaries of the Bible Society in London. The recent publication of these letters has revealed to us Borrow's methods. When he had settled down at Oulton he took down his notebooks, one of which is before me, but finding this was not sufficient, he asked the Bible Society for the loan of his letters to them. Other letters that he hoped to use were not forthcoming, as the following note from Miss Gurney to Mrs. Borrow indicates:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

EARLHAM, 12th June, 1840.

DEAR MRS. BORROW,—I am sorry I cannot find any of Mr. Borrow's letters from Spain. I don't think we ever had any, but my brother is from home and I therefore cannot inquire of him. I send you the only two I can find. I am very glad he is going to publish his travels, which I have no doubt will be very interesting. It must be a pleasant object to assist him by copying the manuscripts. If I should visit Lowestoft this summer I shall hope to see you, but I have no immediate prospect of doing so. With kind regards to all your party, I am, Dear Mrs. Borrow, Yours sincerely,

C. GURNEY.<sup>1</sup>

The Bible Society, applied to in the same manner, lent Borrow all his letters to that organisation and its secretaries. Not all were returned. Many came to Dr. Knapp when he purchased the half of the Borrow papers that were sold after Borrow's death; the remainder are in my possession. It is a nice point, seventy years after they were written,

<sup>1</sup> This was Miss Catherine Gurney, who was born in 1776, in Magdalen Street, Norwich, and died at Lowestoft in 1850, aged seventy-five. She twice presided over the Earlham home. The brother referred to was Joseph John Gurney.

## The Life of George Borrow

as to whom they belong. In any case the Bible Society must have kept copies of everything, for when, in 1911, they came to publish the *Letters* the collection was sufficiently complete. That publication revealed some interesting sidelights. It proved on the one hand that Borrow had drawn more upon his diaries than upon his letters, although he frequently reproduced fragments of his diaries in his letters. It revealed further the extraordinary frankness with which Borrow wrote to his employers. It is true that it further reveals the manner in which he throws a sop of godliness to the worthy secretaries. But the main point is in the discovery revealed to us that Borrow was not an artist in his letters. Borrow was never a good letter writer, although I think that many of the letters that appear for the first time in these pages will prove that his letters are very interesting as contributions to biography. If some of the letters that helped to make up *The Bible in Spain* are interesting, it is because in them Borrow incorporated considerable fragments of anecdote and adventure from his note-books. It is quite a mistake to assume, as does Dr. Knapp, that the "Rev. and Dear Sir" at the head of a letter was the only variation. You will look in vain in the Bible Society correspondence for many a pearl that is contained in *The Bible in Spain*, and happily you will look in vain in *The Bible in Spain* for many an unctuous sentence which concludes some of the original letters. In one case, indeed, a letter concludes with Heber's hymn—

"From Greenland's Icy Mountains,"

with which Borrow's correspondent must already have been sufficiently familiar. But Borrow could not be other than Borrow, and the secretaries of the Bible Society had plentiful matter with which to astonish them. The finished production, however, is a fascinating book. You read it again and it becomes still more entertaining. No wonder that it took the world by storm and made its author the lion of a season. "A queer book will be this same *Bible in Spain*," wrote Borrow to John Murray in August, 1841, "containing all my queer adventures in that queer country . . . it will make two nice foolscap octavo volumes." It actually made three volumes, and Borrow was as irritated at Mr. Murray's delay in publishing as that publisher after-

## "The Bible in Spain"

wards became at Borrow's own delay over *Lavengro*. The whole book was laboriously copied out by Mrs. Borrow. When this copy was sent to Mr. Murray, it was submitted to his "reader," who reported "numerous faults in spelling and some in grammar," to which criticism Borrow retorted that the copy was the work of "a country amanuensis." The book was published in December, 1842, but has the date 1843 on its title-page. In its three-volumed form 4750 copies of the book were issued by July, 1843, after which countless copies were sold in cheaper one-volumed form. Success had at last come to Borrow. He was one of the most talked-of writers of the day. His elation may be demonstrated by his discussion with Dawson Turner as to whether he should leave the manuscript of *The Bible in Spain* to the Dean and Chapter's Library at Norwich or to the British Museum, by his gratification at the fact that Sir Robert Peel referred to his book in the House of Commons, and by his pleasure in the many appreciative reviews which, indeed, were for the most part all that an ambitious author could desire. "Never," said *The Examiner*, "was book more legibly impressed with the unmistakable mark of genius." "There is no taking leave of a book like this," said the *Athenæum*. "Better Christmas fare we have never had it in our power to offer our readers."

The publication of *The Bible in Spain* made Borrow famous for a time. Hitherto he had been known only to a small religious community, the coterie that ran the Bible Society. Even the large mass of people who subscribed to that Society knew its agent in Spain only by meagre allusions in the Annual Reports. Now the world was to talk about him, and he enjoyed being talked about. Borrow declared—in 1842—that the five years he passed in Spain were the most happy years of his existence. But then he had not had a happy life during the previous years, as we have seen, and in Russia he had a toilsome task with an added element of uncertainty as to the permanence of his position. The five years in Spain had plentiful adventure, and they closed in a pleasant manner. Yet the year that followed, even though it found him almost a country squire, was not a happy one. Once again the world did not want him and his books—not the *Gypsies of Spain* for example. Seven weeks after publication it had sold only to the extent of

## The Life of George Borrow

some three hundred copies. But the happiest year of Borrow's life was undoubtedly the one that followed the publication of *The Bible in Spain*. Up to that time he had been a mere adventurer; now he was that most joyous of beings—a successful author; and here, from among his Papers, is a carefully preserved relic of his social triumph:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ., AT MR. MURRAY'S,  
BOOKSELLER, ALBEMARLE STREET

4 CARLTON TERRACE, Tuesday, 30th May.

The Prussian Minister and Madam Bunsen would be very happy to see Mr. Borrow to-morrow, Wednesday evening, about half past nine o'clock or later, when some German national songs will be performed at their house, which may possibly suit Mr. Borrow's taste. They hoped to have met him last night at the Bishop of Norwich's, but arrived there too late. They had already commissioned Lady Hall (sister to Madam Bunsen) to express to Mr. Borrow their wish for his acquaintance.

In a letter to his wife he writes of this visit to the Prussian Minister, where he had for company "Princes and Members of Parliament." "I was the star of the evening," he says; "I thought to myself, 'what a difference!'" There is an independent version of the function in the *Annals of the Harford Family*, where a correspondent writes:

There was present the amusing author of *The Bible in Spain*, a man who is remarkable for his extraordinary powers as a linguist, and for the originality of his character, not to speak of the wonderful adventures he narrates, and the ease and facility with which he tells them. He kept us laughing a good part of breakfast time by the oddity of his remarks, as well as the positiveness of his assertions, often rather startling, and, like his books, partaking of the marvellous.

Borrow's next letter to his wife is more chastened:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, SUFFOLK

Wednesday, 58 JERMYN STREET.

DEAR CARRETA,—I was glad to receive your letter; I half expected one on Tuesday. I am, on the whole, very comfortable, and people are kind. I passed last Sunday at Clapham with Mrs. Browne; I was glad to go there for it was a gloomy day. They are now glad enough to ask me: I suppose I must stay in London

## "The Bible in Spain"

through next week. I have an invitation to two grand parties, and it is as well to have something for one's money. I called at the Bible Society—all remarkably civil, Joseph especially so. I think I shall be able to manage with my own Dictionary. There is now a great demand for Morrison. Yesterday I again dined at the Murrays. There was a family party; very pleasant. Tomorrow I dine with an old school-fellow. Murray is talking of printing a new edition to sell for five shillings: those rascals, the Americans, have, it seems, reprinted it, and are selling it for *eighteen* pence. Murray says he shall print ten thousand copies; it is chiefly wanted for the Colonies. He says the rich people and the libraries have already got it, and he is quite right, for nearly three thousand copies have been sold at 27s.<sup>1</sup> There is no longer the high profit to be made on books there formerly was, as the rascals abroad pirate the good ones, and in the present state of copyright there is no help; we can, however, keep the American edition out of the Colonies, which is something. I have nothing more to say save to commend you not to go on the water without me; perhaps you would be over-set; and do not go on the bridge again till I come. Take care of Habismilk and Craffs; kiss the little mare and old Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

The earliest literary efforts of Borrow in Spain were his two translations of St. Luke's Gospel—the one into Romany, the other into Basque. This last book he did not actually translate himself, but procured "from a Basque physician of the name of Oteiza."

<sup>1</sup> 4750 copies were sold in the three volume form in 1843, and a sixth and cheaper edition the same year sold 9000 copies.

## CHAPTER XXII

### RICHARD FORD

THE most distinguished of Borrow's friends in the years that succeeded his return from Spain was Richard Ford, whose interests were so largely wrapped up in the story of that country. Ford was possessed of a very interesting personality, which was not revealed to the public until Mr. Rowland E. Prothero issued his excellent biography in 1905, although Ford died in 1858. This delay is the more astonishing as Ford's *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* was one of the most famous books of its day. Ford's father, Sir Richard Ford, was a friend of William Pitt, and twice sat in Parliament, being at one time Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. He ended his official career as a police magistrate at Bow Street, but deserves to be better known to fame as the creator of the mounted police force of London. Ford was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, inheriting a fortune from his father, and from his mother an extraordinary taste for art. Although called to the Bar he never practised, but spent his time in travelling on the Continent, building up a valuable collection of books and paintings. He was three times married, and all these unions seem to have been happy, in spite of an almost unpleasant celerity in the second alliance, which took place nine months after the death of his first wife. A very large portion of his life he devoted to Spain, which he knew so intimately that in 1845 he produced that remarkable *Handbook* in two closely printed volumes, a most repellent-looking book in appearance to those who are used to contemporary typography, usually so attractive. Ford, in fact, was so full of his subject that instead of a handbook he wrote a work which ought to have appeared in half a dozen volumes. In later editions the book was condensed into one of Mr. Murray's usual guide-books, but the curious may still enjoy the work in its earliest form, so rich in discussions of the

## Richard Ford

Spanish people, their art and architecture, their history and their habits. The greater part of the letters in Mr. Prothero's collection are addressed to Addington, who was our ambassador to Madrid for some years, until he was superseded by George Villiers, Lord Clarendon, with whom Borrow came so much in contact. Those letters reveal a remarkably cultivated mind and an interesting outlook on life, an outlook that was always intensely anti-democratic. It is impossible to sympathise with him in his brutal reference to the execution by the Spaniards of Robert Boyd, a young Irishman who was captured with Torrijos by the Spanish Government in 1831. Richard Ford apparently left Spain very shortly before George Borrow entered that country. Ford passed through Madrid on his way to England in September, 1833. He then settled near Exeter, purchasing an Elizabethan cottage called Heavitree House, with twelve acres of land, and devoted himself to turning it into a beautiful mansion. Presumably he first met Borrow in Mr. John Murray's famous drawing-room soon after the publication of *The Gypsies in Spain*. He tells Addington, indeed, in a letter of 14th January, 1841:

I have made acquaintance with an extraordinary fellow, George Borrow, who went out to Spain to convert the gypsies. He is about to publish his failure, and a curious book it will be. It was submitted to my perusal by the hesitating Murray.

Ford's article upon Borrow's book appeared in *The British and Foreign Review*, and Ford was delighted that the book had created a sensation, and that he had given sound advice as to publishing the manuscript. When *The Bible in Spain* was ready, Ford was one of the first to read it. Then he wrote to John Murray:

I read Borrow with great delight all the way down per rail. You may depend upon it that the book will sell, which after all is the rub.

And in that letter Ford describes the book as putting him in mind of *Gil Blas* with "a touch of Bunyan." Lockhart himself reviewed the book in *The Quarterly*, so Ford had to go to the rival organ—*The Edinburgh Review*—receiving £44 for the article, which sum, he tells us, he invested in Château Margaux.

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Ford's first letter to Borrow in my collection is written in Spanish, but I content myself with giving only a translation:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ., OULTON HALL, LOWESTOFT  
(Translated from the Spanish)

HEAVITREE HOUSE, EXETER, Jan. 19, 1842.

DEAR FRIEND,—I was glad to hear from you of the successful termination of your literary work. Fancy those rogues of Zincali! They have managed to make good money—I always thought Messrs. M. very decent people, it usually happens that those who have much to do with good class of people become themselves somewhat large-minded and liberal. You must admit that I am a model critic, and that I cry, "Luck to the Books." Full well do I know how you thank the most noble and illustrious public! Go ahead, therefore, and leave nothing forgotten in the ink-pot; but by all that is holy, shun the Spanish historians, who are liars and fools! I regret very much that you should have left London; I leave here on Saturday with the intention of paying a visit of about three weeks to the maternal home, as is my custom in the month of the Christmas boxes. Very much would I have liked to see you and discuss with you about things of Spain and other gypsy lore and fancy topics, but of which at present nothing do I understand. I shall not fail to take with me the papers and documents which you kindly sent me to Cheltenham. I will make them into a parcel and leave them with Messrs. Murray, so that you can send for them whenever you like. I shall do my best to penetrate those mysteries and that strange people. Mr. Murray, junior, writes in a pleased tone respecting *The Bible in Spain*. I should like to write an article on a subject so full of interest. Possibly my article on the gypsies will appear in the next number, and in such case it will prove more useful to you than if it appeared now. The life and memory of reviews are very short. They appear like butterflies, and die in a day. The dead and the departed have no friends. The living to the feast, the dead to the grave. No sooner does a new number appear than the last one is already forgotten and joins the things of the past. What do you think? At a party recently in which a drawing was held, I drew the *Krallis de los Zincali*. I beg to enclose the table (or index) for your Majesty's guidance; really, I must have in my veins a few drops of the genuine wanderer. Mr. Gagargos has been just appointed Spanish Consul in Tunis, where he will not lack means for progressing in the Arabic language and literature.—Yours, in all friendliness,

RICHARD FORD.

Here is a second letter of the following month:

February 26th, HEAVITREE HOUSE, EXETER.

BATUSCHKA BORROW,—I am glad that the paper pleased you, and I think it calculated to promote the sale, which a too copious

## Richard Ford

extracting article does not always do, as people think that they have had the cream. Napier sent me £44 for the thirty-two pages; this, with Kemble's £50, 8s. for the *Zincali*, nearly reaches £100: I lay it out in claret, being not amiss to do in the world, and richer by many hundreds a year than last year, but with a son at Eton and daughters coming out, and an overgrown set of servants, money is never to be despised, and I find that expenditure by some infernal principle has a greater tendency to increase than income, and that when the latter increases it never does so in the ratio of the former—enough of that. How to write an article without being condensed—epigrammatical and *epitomical cream-skimming that is*—I know not, one has so much to say and so little space to say it in.

I rejoice to hear of your meditated biography; really I am your wet nurse, and you ought to dedicate it to me; take time, but not too much; avoid all attempts to write fine; just dash down the first genuine uppouring idea and thoughts in the plainest language and that which comes first, and then fine it and compress it. Let us have a glossary; for people cry out for a Dragoman, and half your local gusto evaporates.

I am amazed at the want of profits—'tis sad to think what meagre profits spring from pen and ink; but Cervantes died a beggar and is immortal. It is the devil who comes into the market with ready money: *No solvendum in futuro*: I well know that it is cash down which makes the mare to go; dollars will add spurs even to the Prince of Mustard's paces.

It is a bore not receiving even the crumbs which drop from such tables as those spread by Mr. Eyre: Murray, however, is a deep cove, *y muy pratico en cosas de libreria*: and he knew that the *first out* about Afghan would sell prodigiously. I doubt now if Lady Sale would now be such a general Sale. Murray builds solid castles in Eyre. *Los de España rezalo bene de ser siempre muy Cosas de España: Cachaza! Cachaza! firme, firme! Arriba! no dejei nada en el tintero; basta que sea nuevo y muy piquunte cor sal y ajo: a los Ingleses le gustan mucho las Longanizas de Abarbenel y los buenos Choriyo de Montanches:*

El handbook sa her concluido jeriayer: ahora principia el trabajo: Tengo benho un monton de papel acombroso. El menester reducirlo a la mitad y eso so hara castratandolo de lo bueno duro y particular a romperse el alma:

I had nothing to do whatever with the *manner* in which the handbook puff was affixed to your book. I wrote the said paper, but concluded that Murray would put it, as usual, in the flyleaf of the book, as he does in his others, and the *Q. Rev.*

Sabe mucho el hijo—ha imaginado altacar mi obresilla al flejo de vuestra immortalidad y lo que le toca de corazon, facilitarse la venta.

Yo no tengo nada en eso y quedé tanalustado amo Vm a la primera vista de aquella hoja volante. Conque Mantengare Vm

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bueno y alegre y mande Vm siempre, a S: S: S: y buen Critico,  
L: I: M: B., R. F.

During these years—1843 and onwards—Borrow was regularly corresponding with Ford, as we learn from Ford's own words:—

Borrow writes me word that his Life is nearly ready, and it will run the Bible hull down. If he tells truth it will be a queer thing. I shall review it for *The Edinburgh*.

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ., OULTON HALL, LOWESTOFT

123 PARK MANSIONS, Thursday, April 13, 1843.

BATUSCHKA B.—Knowing that you seldom see a newspaper I send you one in which Peel speaks very handsomely of your labour. Such a public testimonial is a good puff, and I hope will attract purchasers.—Sincerely yours, R. F.

This refers to a speech of Peel's in the House of Commons, in which in reply to a very trivial question by Dr. Bowring, then M.P. for Bolton, upon the subject of the correspondence of the British Government with Turkey, the great statesman urged:

It might have been said to Mr. Borrow, with respect to Spain, that it would be impossible to distribute the Bible in that country in consequence of the danger of offending the prejudices which prevail there; yet he, a private individual, by showing some zeal in what he believed to be right, succeeded in triumphing over many obstacles.<sup>1</sup>

Borrow was elated with the compliment, and asked Mr. Murray two months later if he could not advertise the eulogium with one of his books.

In June, 1844, while the *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* was going to press, Ford went on a visit to Borrow at Oulton Hall, and describes the pair as "two rum coves in a queer country"; and further gives one of the best descriptions of the place:

His house hangs over a lonely lake covered with wild fowl, and is girt with dark firs through which the wind sighs sadly.

When the *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* was published

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 12th April, 1843.

## Richard Ford

in 1845 it was agreed that Borrow should write the review for *The Quarterly*. Instead of writing a review Borrow, possessed by that tactlessness which so frequently overcame him, wrote an article on "Spain and the Spaniards," very largely of abuse, an absolutely useless production from the point of view of Ford the author, and of Lockhart, his editor friend. Borrow never forgave Lockhart for returning this manuscript, but that it had no effect on Ford's friendship is shown by the letter on p. 167, dated 1846, written long after the unfortunate episode, and another in Dr. Knapp's *Life*, dated 1851.

TO MRS. BORROW, OULTON HALL, LOWESTOFT

Oct. 6, 1844, CHELTENHAM.

MY DEAR MADAM,—I trouble you with a line to say that I have received a letter from Don Jorge, from Constantinople. He evidently is now anxious to be quietly back again on the banks of your peaceful lake; he speaks favourably of his health, which has been braced up by change of air, scenery, and occupations, so I hope he will get through next winter without any bronchitis, and go on with his own biography.

He asks me when *Handbook* will be done? Please to tell him that it is done and printing, but that it runs double the length which was contemplated: however, it will be a *queer* book, and tell him that we reserve it until his return to review it. I am now on the point of quitting this pretty place and making for my home at Hevitre, where we trust to arrive next Thursday. Present my best compliments to your mother, and believe me, your faithful and obedient servant,

RCH. FORD.

When you write to Don Jorge thank him for his letter.

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ., OULTON HALL, LOWESTOFT

123 PARLIAMENT STREET,  
GROSVENOR SQUARE, Feb. 17, 1845.

DEAR BORROW,—*El hombre propone pero Dios es que dispone*. I had hoped to have run down and seen you and yours in your quiet Patmos; but the Sangrados will it otherwise. I have never been quite free from a tickling pain since the bronchitis of last year, and it has recently assumed the form of extreme relaxation and irritation in the uvula, which is that pendulous appendage which hangs over the orifice of the throat. Mine has become so seriously elongated that, after submitting for four days last week to its being burnt with caustic every morning in the hopes that it might thus crimp and contract itself, I

## The Life of George Borrow

have been obliged to have it amputated. This has left a great soreness, which militates against talking and deglutition, and would render our charming chats after the Madeira over la cheminea del *cueldo* inadvisable. I therefore defer the visit: my Sangrado recommends me, when the summer advances, to fly away into change of air, change of scene; in short, must seek an *hijira* as you made. How strange the coincidence! but those who have wandered much about require periodical migration, as the encaged quail twice a year beats its breast against the wires.

I am not quite determined where to go, whether to Scotland and the sweet heath-aided hills, or to the wild rocks and clear trout streams of the Tyrol; it is a question between the gun and the rod. If I go north assuredly si Dios quiere I will take your friendly and peaceful abode in my way.

As to my immediate plans I can say nothing before Thursday, when the Sangrado is to report on some diagnosis which he expects.

Meanwhile *Handbook* is all but out, and Lockhart and Murray are eager to have you in the *Q. R.* I enclose you a note from the editor. How feel you inclined? I would send you down 30 sheets, and you might run your eye through them. *There are plums in the pudding.*

RICHARD FORD.

A proof in slip form of the rejected review, with Borrow's corrections written upon it, is in my possession. Our author pictures Gibraltar as a human entity thus addressing Spain:

Accursed land! I hate thee, and far from being a defence, will invariably prove a thorn in thy side.

And so on through many sentences of excited rhetoric. Borrow forgot while he wrote that he had a book to review—a book, moreover, issued by the publishing house which issued the periodical in which his review was to appear. And this book was a book in ten thousand—a veritable mine of information and out of the way learning. Surely this slight reference amid many dissertations of his own upon Spain was to damn his friend's book with faint praise:

A Handbook is a Handbook after all, a very useful thing, but still—the fact is that we live in an age of humbug, in which everything, to obtain note and reputation, must depend less upon its own intrinsic merit than on the name it bears. The present book is about one of the best books ever written upon Spain; but we are afraid that it will never be estimated at its proper value; for after all a Handbook is a Handbook.

## Richard Ford

Yet successful as was Ford's *Handbook*, it is doubtful but that Borrow was right in saying that it had better have been called *Wanderings in Spain* or *Wonders of the Peninsula*. How much more gracious was the statement of another great authority on Spain—Sir William Stirling-Maxwell—who said that "so great a literary achievement had never before been performed under so humble a title." The article, however, furnishes a trace of autobiography in the statement by Borrow that he had long been in the habit of reading *Don Quixote* once every nine years. Yet he tells us that he prefers Le Sage's *Gil Blas* to *Don Quixote*, "the characters introduced being certainly more true to nature." But altogether we do not wonder that Lockhart declined to publish the article. Here is the last letter in my possession; after this there is one in the Knapp collection dated 1851, acknowledging a copy of *Lavengro*, in which Fords adds: "Mind when you come to see the Exhibition you look in here, for I long to have a chat," and so the friendship appears to have collapsed as so many friendships do. Ford died at Heavitree in 1858:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ., OULTON HALL, LOWESTOFT

HEAVITREE, *Jany.* 28, 1846.

QUERIDO DON JORGE.—How are you getting on in health and spirits? and how has this absence of winter suited you? Are you inclined for a run up to town next week? I propose to do so, and Murray, who has got Washington Irving, etc., to dine with him on Wednesday the 4th, writes to me to know if I thought you could be induced to join us. Let me whisper in your ear, yea: it will do you good and give change of air, scene and thought: we will go and beat up the renowned Billy Harper, and see how many more ribs are stoved in.

I have been doing a paper for the *Q. R.* on Spanish Architecture; how gets on the *Lavengro*? I see the "gypsies" are coming out in the *Colonial*, which will have a vast sale.

John Murray seems to be flourishing in spite of corn and railomania.

Remember me kindly and respectfully to your Ladies, and beg them to tell you what good it will do you to have a friak up to town, and a little quiet chat with your pal and amigo,

RICHARD FORD.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### IN EASTERN EUROPE

IN 1844 Borrow set out for the most distant holiday that he was ever to undertake. Passing through London in March, 1844, he came under the critical eye of Elizabeth Rigby, afterwards Lady Eastlake, that formidable critic who four years later—in 1848—wrote the cruel review of *Jane Eyre* in *The Quarterly* that gave so much pain to Charlotte Brontë. She was not a nice woman. These sharp, "clever" women-critics rarely are; and Borrow never made a pleasant impression when such women came across his path—instance Harriet Martineau, Frances Cobbe, and Agnes Strickland. We should sympathise with him, and not count it for a limitation, as some of his biographers have done. The future Lady Eastlake thus disposes of Borrow in her one reference to him:

*March 20.*—Borrow came in the evening; now a fine man, but a most disagreeable one; a kind of character that would be most dangerous in rebellious times—one that would suffer or persecute to the utmost. His face is expressive of strong-headed determination.

Quoting this description of Borrow, Dr. Knapp describes it as "shallow"—for "he was one of the kindest of men, as my documents show." The description is shallow enough, because the writer had no kind of comprehension of Borrow; but then, perhaps, his champion had not. Borrow was neither one of the "kindest of men" nor the reverse. He was a good hater and a whole-hearted lover, and to be thus is to fill a certain uncomfortable but not discreditable place in the scheme of things. About a month later Borrow was on the way to the East, travelling by Paris and Vienna.

In May he is in Vienna, whence he writes to his wife:—

# In Eastern Europe

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

VIENNA, May 16, 1844.

MY DEAREST CARRETA,—I arrived here the day before yesterday, and so early as yesterday I had begun a letter for you, but I now commence another, as I have rather altered my intentions since that time. I thought at first I should not like this place, for the difficulty of finding accommodation in the inns is very great. I went to four, but found them all full, and though I at last got into one, it was in every respect inconvenient and uncomfortable; to-day, however, I have taken a lodging for a month, two handsome chambers at about 25 shillings per week. I do not like dark, gloomy places, as they affect my poor spirits terribly. You will find the address farther on, and I wish you to write to me, for I long so much to hear from my dearest. Since I last wrote I have traversed nearly the whole breadth of Germany. On leaving Strasbourg I passed through what is called the Black Forest, a range of mountains covered with pine forests; the scenery was grand and beautiful to a degree. I then came to wide plains, which crossing I reached Ulm and Augsburg, which last place, as you will see by the map, is in the heart of Germany. It is celebrated for what is called the Confession of Augsburg: that is, the declaration of faith which was published there by Luther and the other reformers. I then went to Munich, a beautiful city, the capital of the Kingdom of Bavaria, where there is a most noble gallery of pictures; the porter is a giant about seven feet high. I entered into discourse with him, and found him very good-natured and communicative. From Munich I went to Ratisbon, a fine old place, and there I embarked in a steamer which goes down the Danube, the noblest river in Europe—you cannot conceive anything equal to the grandeur of its banks. Almost all the way from Ratisbon to Vienna it runs amongst huge mountains covered with forests from the top to the bottom; the stream is wonderfully rapid, running like a mill flush; the waters are whitish, being continually fed by the snows of the Alps. Here and there upon the banks you see the ruins of old castles, which add considerably to the effect of the scene; before reaching Vienna, however, it leaves the mountains and spreads itself over a wide plain, in the midst of which Vienna stands. Since I last wrote to you I have had some strange adventures, but the strangest of all is the following.

We were two days in coming down the Danube, and the first night we stopped at Lenz, a frontier town of Austria, in the heart of the mountains. I was very tired and low-spirited, and, after looking about the town a little while, I went to the inn where I had put up and went to bed. The evening was dull, sultry and oppressive; the room, however, where I lay, overlooked the Danube, and a refreshing coolness came from the water through the window, which I had left open. I had

## The Life of George Borrow

composed myself and was just falling to sleep, when I was roused by a knock at the door. "Come in," I cried, and a man in a pair of high Hessian boots, and dressed in black, walked into the room. I had seen him on board the steamer, and had held some conversation with him in French about Spain, concerning which he seemed very inquisitive. He held something in his hand which I could not distinguish, as it was dark, so much so that I should have hardly recognized the man himself but for his Hessian boots. He came straight to the bed and seized my hand. "So it is you," said he; "I almost thought I recognized you on board the vessel by your manner of discourse, but now I am certain: I have just seen your name below inscribed by your own hand in the travellers' book. How astonishing, that I should thus have met the very person whom I have long had the greatest desire to see!" "Who are you?" said I; "I have not the pleasure of knowing you." "I am the Dean of Ratisbon," said he; "and I come to beg, as the greatest of favours, that you would condescend to write your name in this book, which I always carry about with me when I travel." He then put into my hand Murray's cheap edition of "The Bible in Spain," and, ringing the bell, called for a light. "I am a Roman Catholic," said he, "but I know how to appreciate genius, especially such as yours. Whenever you set foot in Ratisbon again, pray, pray take up your abode in my house . . ."

Vienna is a very strange place; I do not much like it, but I think I can settle down here for a month tolerably well, especially now I have procured a nice lodging, and commence writing a little anew. God grant that I may be successful; perhaps if I am I may yet see better days, and get rid of the thoughts which have so long beset me. Though I have been here only two days, I have already seen a great deal, amongst other things the Emperor and the Empress; they go to the royal chapel every morning, which, though in the palace, is open to everybody. It is a small but beautiful chapel, very simple, with a Christ on the Cross over the altar, a picture on the right hand side, and Maria with her crown of rays on the left; four tall Heyduks, or Hungarian soldiers, stand in front of the altar, with their backs to the people and their faces to the officiating priests. The singing was admirable; the *theatre band*, which is perhaps the best in the world, being all there, it was so powerful that the voices of the priests could scarcely be heard. The Emperor sat in a kind of covered gallery, his head and the upper part of his body visible through a window; when the service was over, however, I had a full view of him. I stood in one of the ante-rooms, through which he passed to the interior of the palace; the Empress was at his right hand. He is a small, diminutive man, not much more than five feet high; his features, however, are pleasing and good-humoured. The Empress is a head and shoulders taller, and is about the finest woman I ever saw; she looked what she is—Empress of one

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of the most powerful nations of the world. What a beautiful country is Germany, in every point of view superior to France, which is anything but beautiful. Notwithstanding its inhabitants call it "the lovely country," I have traversed it from south to north, and from west to east, and have scarcely seen anything pretty about it, save Versailles, and that is all art, whereas in this country you see not a trace of art, nothing but wild and beautiful nature. The people, moreover, are kind and good, and not continually boasting of themselves and country like the French. About nine days ago I wrote to my dear mother from Augsburg; I hope she received the letter, and that she informed you, my dearest, as I entreated her to do. I am now a great way from you; Vienna is one of the cities in Europe the most distant from England, double as far as Madrid, and more remote even than St. Petersburg; it is about one thousand miles from Paris. The Austrians are quite a distinct race, differing very much from the Prussians and the people of the North of Germany. You scarcely see any foreigners here—few English or French—it is too far for a common trip, and the means of conveyance much more slow than in other parts. From here (D.V.) I intend to go to Hungary, which is close by, being only a day's journey down the Danube; and from thence, when I have spoken with the Gypsies, I shall make the best of my way to Constantinople, and then home by Russia. I want, if I possibly can, to compose my poor mind, for it is no use running about countries unless the mind is at rest. I knew that before I left home, but I had become so unsettled and wretched, as you know, that I could not rest or do anything; the last winter did me no good, and, indeed, we have all of us some reason to remember it. I go on taking those homœopathic globules, but whether they are of any use or effect I can scarcely say; there is one thing, however, which I am sure is of much greater use and comfort to me—it is the little book which my dearest gave me when I left her; I look into it every morning, and sometimes twice or thrice a day. I have done everything you bid me when I set out, and I hope to God that when I return I shall find you well. You are almost my only comfort here on earth, and without you I feel that I should be lost and wild, and my sensations, alas, never deceive me. I hope that in a week or two my dear mother will come over and see you, and that she will be a comfort to you, and you to her; poor, dear thing, she loves you, as well she has right, for a kind, dear, and true wife you have been to her son. Take care of those —, *leurs oreilles sont toujours ouvertes*. Don't let us be blinded a third time. I hope all the animals are well. I saw to-day in the street two enormous parrots or mackaws to sell—one was quite white, and the other red. I thought of poor, dear Hen; I am making a collection of coins for her, gold and silver, and I hope at my return to bring her some French, Turkish, and Russian money. I shall be glad to get home, for it is doleful to be alone, especially at night; I have,

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however, your little book, which I take in my hand, and which frequently puts me to sleep. And now, my Carreta, I must conclude, having said all I have to say for the present. This is my direction:—

Mr. Borrow,  
Chez Mr. Guglielmi,  
Rothenthurmstrasse N° 642, 3. étage,  
Vienna,  
Austria.

God bless you, my dearest; I should like to hear from you. You will probably receive this in about ten days, so that I could have an answer from you before I leave. Kiss Hen, remember me to dear Lucy and Mr. and Mrs. Utting; and God bless you.  
G. B.

In June he is in Buda Pesth, whence he wrote to his wife:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

PESTH, HUNGARY, 14th June 1844.

MY DEAREST CARRETA,—I was so glad to get your letter which reached me about nine days ago; on receiving it, I instantly made preparations for quitting Vienna, but owing to two or three things which delayed me, I did not get away till the 20th; I hope that you received the last letter which I sent, as I doubt not that you are all anxious to hear from me. You cannot think how anxious I am to get back to you, but since I am already come so far, it will not do to return before my object is accomplished. Heaven knows that I do not travel for travelling's sake, having a widely different object in view. I came from Vienna here down the Danube, but I daresay I shall not go farther by the river, but shall travel through the country to Bucharest in Wallachia, which is the next place I intend to visit; but Hungary is a widely different country to Austria, not at all civilised, no coaches, etc., but only carts and wagons; however, it is all the same thing to me as I am quite used to rough it; Bucharest is about three hundred miles from here; the country, as I have said before, is wild, but the people are quite harmless—it is only in Spain that any danger is to be feared from your fellow creatures. In Bucharest I shall probably stay a fortnight. I have a letter to a French gentleman there from Baron Taylor. Pesth is very much like Edinburgh—there is an old and a new town, and it is only the latter which is called Pesth, the name of the old is Buda, which stands on the side of an enormous mountain overlooking the new town, the Danube running between. The two towns together contain about 120,000 inhabitants; I delivered the

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letter which dear Woodfall was kind enough to send; it was to a person, a Scotchman, who is superintending in the building of the chain bridge over the Danube; he is a very nice person, and has shown me every kind of civility; indeed, every person here is very civil; yesterday I dined at the house of a rich Greek; the dinner was magnificent, the only drawback was that they pressed me too much to eat and drink; there was a deal of champagne, and they would make me drink it till I was almost sick, for it is a wine that I do not like, being far too sweet. Since I have been here I have bathed twice in the Danube, and find myself much the better for it; I both sleep and eat better than I did. I have also been about another chapter, and get on tolerably well; were I not so particular I should get on faster, but I wish that everything that I write in this ~~next~~ be first rate. Tell Mama that this chapter begins with a dialogue between her and my father; I have likewise contrived to bring in the poor old dog in a manner which I think will be interesting. I began this letter some days ago, but have been so pleasantly occupied that I have made little progress till now. Clarke, poor fellow, does not know how to make enough of me. He says he could scarcely believe his eyes when he first received the letter, as he has just got *The Bible in Spain* from England, and was reading it. This is the 17th, and in a few days I start for a place called Debreczen, from whence I shall proceed gradually on my journey. The next letter which you receive will probably be from Transylvania, the one after that from Bucharest, and the third D.V. from Constantinople. If you like you may write to Constantinople, directing it to the care of the English Ambassador, but be sure to pay the postage.

Before I left Vienna Baron Hammer, the great Orientalist, called upon me; his wife was just dead, poor thing, which prevented him showing me all the civility which he would otherwise have done. He took me to the Imperial Library. Both my books were there, *Gypsies* and *Bible*. He likewise procured me a ticket to see the Imperial treasure. (Tell Henrietta that I saw there the diamond of Charles the Bold; it is as large as a walnut.) I likewise saw the finest opal, as I suppose, in the world; it was the size of a middling pear; there was likewise a hyacinth as big as a swan's egg; I likewise saw a pearl so large that they had wrought the figure of a cock out of it, and the cock was somewhat more than an inch high, but the thing which struck me most was the sword of Tamerlane, generally called Timour the Tartar; both the hilt and scabbard were richly adorned with diamonds and emeralds, but I thought more of the man than I did of them, for he was the greatest conqueror the world ever saw (I have spoken of him in *Lavengro* in the chapter about David Haggart). Nevertheless, although I have seen all these fine things, I shall be glad to get back to my Carreta and my darling mother and to dear Hen. From Debreczen I hope to write to kind dear Woodfall, and to Lord

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from Constantinople. I must likewise write to Hasfeld. The mulct of thirty pounds upon Russian passports is only intended for the subjects of Russia. I see by the journals that the Emperor has been in England; I wonder what he is come about; however, the less I say about that the better, as I shall soon be in his country. Tell Hen that I have got her a large piece of Austrian gold money, worth about forty-two shillings; it is quite new and very handsome; considerably wider than the Spanish ounce, only not near so thick, as might be expected, being of considerably less value; when I get to Constantinople I will endeavour to get a Turkish gold coin. I have also got a new Austrian silver dollar and a half one; these are rather cumbersome, and I don't care much about them—as for the large gold coin, I carry it in my pocket-book, which has been of great use to me hitherto. I have not yet lost anything, only a pocket handkerchief or two as usual; but I was obliged to buy two other shirts at Vienna; the weather is so hot, that it is quite necessary to change them every other day; they were beautiful linen ones, and I think you will like them when you see. I shall be so glad to get home and continue, if possible, my old occupation. I hope my next book will sell; one comfort is that nothing like it has ever been published before. I hope you all get on comfortably, and that you catch some fish. I hope my dear mother is well, and that she will continue with you till the end of July at least; ah! that is my month, I was born in it, it is the pleasantest month in the year; would to God that my fate had worn as pleasant an aspect as the month in which I was born. God bless you all. Write to me, to the care of the *British Embassy*, Constantinople. Kind remembrances to Pilgrim.

In the intervening journey between Pesth and Constantinople he must have talked long and wandered far and wide among the gypsies, for Charles L. Brace in his *Hungary in 1851* gives us a glimpse of him at Grosswardein holding conversation with the gypsies:

They described his appearance—his tall, lank, muscular form—and mentioned that he had been much in Spain, and I saw that it must be that most ubiquitous of travellers, Mr. Borrow.

The four following letters require no comment:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

DEBRECZEN, HUNGARY, 24 July 1844.

MY DARLING CARRETA,—I write to you from Debreczen, a town in the heart of Hungary, where I have been for the last fortnight with the exception of three days during which I was making a journey to Tokay, which is about forty miles distant.

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My reason for staying here so long was my liking the place where I have experienced every kind of hospitality; almost all the people in these parts are Protestants, and they are so fond of the very name of Englishman that when one arrives they scarcely know how to make enough of him; it is well the place is so remote that very few are ever seen here, perhaps not oftener than once in ten years, for if some of our scamps and swell mob were once to find their way there the good people of Hungary would soon cease to have much respect for the English in general; as it is they think that they are all men of honour and accomplished gentlemen whom it becomes them to receive well in order that they may receive from them lessons in civilisation; I wonder what they would think if they were to meet such fellows as Squares and others whom I could mention. I find my knowledge of languages here of great use, and the people are astonished to hear me speak French, Italian, German, Russian, and occasionally Gypsy. I have already met with several Gypsies; those who live abroad in the wildernesses are quite black; the more civilised wander about as musicians, playing on the fiddle, at which they are very expert, they speak the same languages as those in England, with slight variations, and upon the whole they understand me very well. Amongst other places I have been to Tokay, where I drank some of the wine. I am endeavouring to bring two or three bottles to England, for I thought of my mother and yourself and Hen., and I have got a little wooden case made; it is very sweet and of a pale straw colour; whether I shall be able to manage it I do not know; however, I shall make the attempt. At Tokay the wine is only two shillings the bottle, and I have a great desire that you should taste some of it. I sincerely hope that we shall soon all meet together in health and peace. I shall be glad enough to get home, but since I am come so far it is as well to see as much as possible. Would you think it, the Bishop of Debreczen came to see me the other day and escorted me about the town, followed by all the professors of the college; this was done merely because I was an Englishman and a Protestant, for here they are almost all of the reformed religion and full of love and enthusiasm for it. It is probable that you will hear from Woodfall in a day or two; the day before yesterday I wrote to him and begged him to write to you to let you know, as I am fearful of a letter miscarrying and your being uneasy. This is unfortunately past day and I must send away the letter in a very little time, so that I cannot say all to you that I could wish; I shall stay here about a week longer, and from here shall make the best of my way to Transylvania and Bucharest; I shall stay at Bucharest about a fortnight, and shall then dash off for Constantinople—I shan't stay there long—but when once there it matters not as it is a civilised country from which start steamers to any part where you may want to go. I hope to receive a letter from you there. You cannot imagine what pleasure I felt when I got your last. Oh, it was

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such a comfort to me! I shall have much to tell you when I get back. Yesterday I went to see a poor wretch who is about to be hanged; he committed a murder here two years ago, and the day after tomorrow he is to be executed—they expose the people here who are to suffer three days previous to their execution—I found him in a small apartment guarded by soldiers, with hundreds of people staring at him through the door and the windows; I was admitted into the room as I went with two officers; he had an enormous chain about his waist and his feet were manacled; he sat smoking a pipe; he was, however, very penitent, and said that he deserved to die, as well he might; he had murdered four people, beating out their brains with a club; he was without work, and requested of an honest man here to receive him into his house one night until the morning. In the middle of the night he got up, and with his brother, who was with him, killed every person in the house and then plundered it; two days after, he was taken; his brother died in prison; I gave him a little money, and the gentleman who was with me gave him some good advice; he looked most like a wild beast, a huge mantle of skin covered his body; for nine months he had not seen the daylight; but now he is brought out into a nice clean apartment, and allowed to have everything he asks for, meat, wine, tobacco—nothing is refused him during these last three days. I cannot help thinking that it is a great cruelty to keep people so long in so horrid a situation; it is two years nearly since he has been condemned. Do not be anxious if you do not hear from me regularly for some time. There is no escort post in the countries to which I am going. God bless my mother, yourself, and Hen. G. B.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

HERMANSTADT, *July 30, 1844.*

MY DEAREST CARRETA,—I write to you a line or two from this place; it is close upon the frontier of Wallachia. I hope to be in Bucharest in a few days—I have stopped here for a day owing to some difficulty in getting horses—I shall hasten onward as quick as possible. In Bucharest there is an English Consul, so that I shall feel more at home than I do here. I am only a few miles now from the termination of the Austrian dominions, their extent is enormous, the whole length of Hungary and Transylvania; I shall only stay a few days in Bucharest and shall then dash off straight for Constantinople; I have no time to lose as there is a high ridge of mountains to cross called the Balkans, where the winter commences at the beginning of September. I thought you would be glad to hear from me, on which account I write. I sent off a letter about a week ago from Klausenburg, which I hope you will receive. I have written various times from Hungary, though whether the letters have reached you is more than I can say. I wrote to Woodfall

## In Eastern Europe

from Debrecsen. I have often told you how glad I shall be to get home and see you again. If I have tarried, it has only been because I wished to see and learn as much as I could, for it was no use coming to such a distance for nothing. By the time I return I shall have made a most enormous journey, such as very few have made. The place from which I write is very romantic, being situated at the foot of a ridge of enormous mountains which extend to the clouds, they look higher than the Pyrenees. My health, thank God, is very good. I bathed to-day and feel all the better for it; I hope you are getting on well, and that all our dear family is comfortable. I hope my dear mother is well. Oh, it is so pleasant to hope that I am still not alone in the world, and that there are those who love and care for me and pray for me. I shall be very glad to get to Constantinople, as from there there is no difficulty; and a great part of the way to Russia is by sea, and when I am in Russia I am almost at home. I shall write to you again from Bucharest if it please God. It is not much more than eighty miles from here, but the way lies over mountains, so that the journey will take three or four days. We travel here in tilted carts drawn by ponies; the carts are without springs, so that one is terribly shaken. It is, however, very healthy, especially when one has a strong constitution. The carts are chiefly made of sticks and wickerwork; they are, of course, very slight, and indeed if they were not so they would soon go to pieces owing to the jolting. I read your little book every morning; it is true that I am sometimes wrong with respect to the date, but I soon get right again; oh, I shall be so glad to see you and my mother and old Hen. and Lucy and the whole dear circle. I hope Crups is well, and the horse. Oh, I shall be so glad to come back. God bless you, my heart's darling, and dear Hen.; kiss her for me, and my mother.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

BUCHAREST, *August 5, 1844.*

MY DEAREST CARRETA,—I write you a few lines from the house of the Consul, Mr. Colquhoun, to inform you that I arrived at Bucharest quite safe: the post leaves to-day, and Mr. C. has kindly permitted me to send a note along with the official despatches. I am quite well, thank God, but I thought you would like to hear from me. Bucharest is in the province of Wallachia and close upon the Turkish frontier. I shall remain here a week or two as I find the place a very interesting one; then I shall proceed to Constantinople. I wrote to you from Hermanstadt last week and the week previous from Clausenburgh, and before I leave I shall write again, and not so briefly as now. I have experienced every possible attention from Mr. C., who is a very delightful person, and indeed everybody is

# The Life of George Borrow

very kind and attentive. I hope sincerely that you and Hen. are quite well and happy, and also my dear mother. God bless you, dearest.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

BUCHAREST, August 14, 1844.

MY DARLING CARRETA,—To-morrow or the next day I leave Bucharest for Constantinople. I wrote to you on my arrival a few days ago, and promise to write again before my departure. I shall not be sorry to get to Constantinople, as from thence I can go wherever I think proper without any difficulty. Since I have been here, Mr. Colquhoun, the British Consul-General, has shown me every civility, and upon the whole I have not passed the time disagreeably. I have been chiefly occupied of late in rubbing up my Turkish a little, which I had almost forgotten; there was a time when I wrote it better than any other language. It is coming again rapidly, and I make no doubt that in a little time I should speak it almost as well as Spanish, for I understand the groundwork. In Hungary and Germany I picked up some curious books, which will help to pass the time at home when I have nothing better to do. It is a long way from here to Constantinople, and it is probable that I shall be fifteen or sixteen days on the journey, as I do not intend to travel very fast. It is possible that I shall stay a day or two at Adrianople, which is half way. If you should not hear from me for some time don't be alarmed, as it is possible that I shall have no opportunities of writing till I get to Constantinople. Bucharest, where I am now, is close on the Turkish frontier, being only half a day's journey. Since I have been here, I have bought a Tartar dress and a couple of Turkish shirts. I have done so in order not to be stared at as I pass along. It is very beautiful and by no means dear. Yesterday I wrote to M. Since I have been here I have seen some English newspapers, and see that chap H. has got in with M. Perhaps his recommendation was that he had once insulted us. However, God only knows. I think I had never much confidence in M. I can read countenances as you know, and have always believed him to be selfish and insincere. I, however, care nothing about him, and will not allow, D.V., any conduct of his to disturb me. I shall be glad to get home, and if I can but settle down a little, I feel that I can accomplish something great. I hope that my dear mother is well, and that you are all well. God bless you. It is something to think that since I have been away I have to a certain extent accomplished what I went about. I am stronger and better and hardier, my cough has left me, there is only occasionally a little huskiness in the throat. I have also increased my stock of languages, and my imagination is brightened. Bucharest is a strange place with much grandeur and much filth. Since I have been here I have dined almost

## In Eastern Europe

every day with Mr. C., who wants me to have an apartment in his house. I thought it, however, better to be at an inn, though filthy. I have also dined once at the Russian Consul-General's, whom I knew in Russia. Now God bless you my heart's darling; kiss also Hen., write to my mother, and remember me to all friends.

G. BORROW.

The best letter that I have of this journey, and indeed the best letter of Borrow's that I have read, is one from Constantinople to his wife—the only letter by him from that city:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

CONSTANTINOPLE, 16th September 1844.

MY DARLING CARRETA,—I am about to leave Constantinople and to return home. I have given up the idea of going to Russia; I find that if I go to Odessa I shall have to remain in quarantine for fourteen days, which I have no inclination to do; I am, moreover, anxious to get home, being quite tired of wandering, and desirous of being once more with my loved ones. This is a most interesting place, but unfortunately it is extremely dear. The Turks have no inns, and I am here at an English one, at which, though everything is comfortable, the prices are very high. To-day is Monday, and next Friday I purpose starting for Salonica in a steamboat—Salonica is in Albania. I shall then cross Albania, a journey of about three hundred miles, and get to Corfu, from which I can either get to England across Italy and down the Rhine, or by way of Marseilles and across France. I shall not make any stay in Italy if I go there, as I have nothing to see there. I shall be so glad to be at home with you once again, and to see my dear mother and Hen. Tell Hen. that I picked up for her in one of the bazaars a curious Armenian coin; it is silver, small, but thick, with a most curious inscription upon it. I gave fifteen piastres for it. I hope it and the rest will get safe to England. I have bought a chest, which I intend to send by sea, and I have picked up a great many books and other things, and I wish to travel light; I shall, therefore, only take a bag with a few clothes and shirts. It is possible that I shall be at home soon after your receiving this, or at most three weeks after. I hope to write to you again from Corfu, which is a British island with a British garrison in it, like Gibraltar; the English newspapers came last week. I see those wretched French cannot let us alone, they want to go to war; well, let them; they richly deserve a good drubbing. The people here are very kind in their way, but home is home, especially such a one as mine, with true hearts to welcome me. Oh, I was so glad to get your letters; they were rather of a distant date, it is true, but they

# The Life of George Borrow

quite revived me. I hope you are all well, and my dear mother. Since I have been here I have written to Mr. Lord. I was glad to hear that he has written to Hen. I hope Lucy is well; pray remember me most kindly to her, and tell her that I hope to see her soon. I count so of getting into my summer-house again, and sitting down to write; I have arranged my book in my mind, and though it will take me a great deal of trouble to write it, I feel that when it is written it will be first-rate. My journey, with God's help, has done me a great deal of good. I am stronger than I was, and I can now sleep. I intend to draw on England for forty or fifty pounds; if I don't want the whole of it, it will be all the same. I have still some money left, but I have no wish to be stopped on my journey for want of it. I am sorry about what you told me respecting the railway, sorry that the old coach is driven off the road. I shall patronise it as little as possible, but stick to the old route and Thurton George. What a number of poor people will these railroads deprive of their bread. I am grieved at what you say about poor M.; he can take her into custody, however, and oblige her to support the children; such is law, though the property may have been secured to her, she can be compelled to do that. Tell Hen. that there is a mosque here, called the mosque of Sultan Bajazet; it is full of sacred pigeons; there is a corner of the court to which the creatures flock to be fed, like bees, by hundreds and thousands; they are not at all afraid, as they are never killed. Every place where they can roost is covered with them, their impudence is great; they sprang originally from two pigeons brought from Asia by the Emperor of Constantinople. They are of a deep blue. God bless you, dearest.

G. B.

He returned home by way of Venice and Rome as the following two letters indicate:

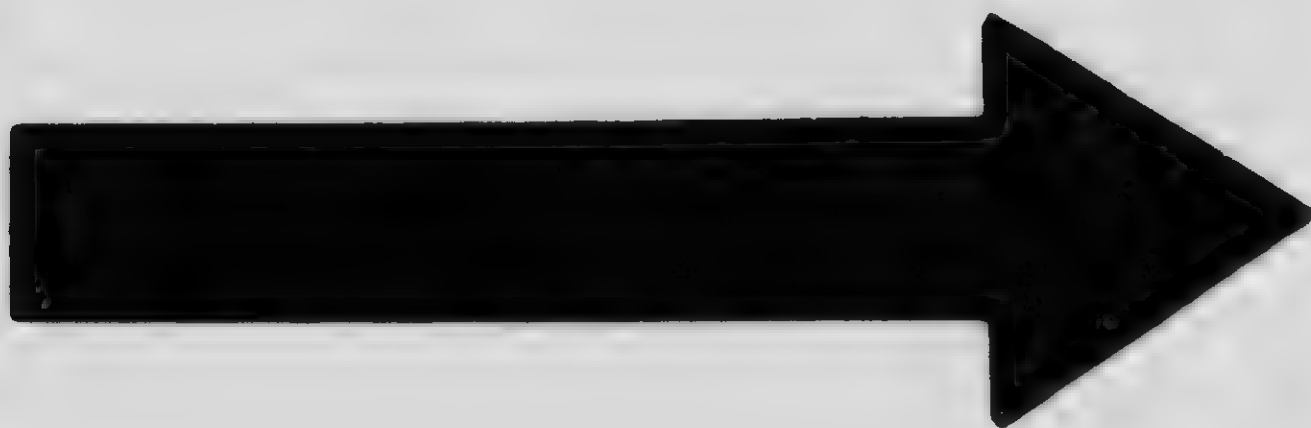
TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

VENICE, 22nd Oct. 1844.

MY DEAREST CARRETA,—I arrived this day at Venice, and though I am exceedingly tired I hasten to write a line to inform you of my well-being. I am now making for home as fast as possible, and I have now nothing to detain me. Since I wrote to you last I have been again in quarantine for two days and a half at Trieste, but I am glad to say that I shall no longer be detained on that account. I was obliged to go to Trieste, though it was much out of my way, otherwise I must have remained I know not how long in Corfu, waiting for a direct conveyance. After my liberation I only stopped a day at Corfu in order that I might lose no more time, though I really wished to tarry there a little longer, the people were so kind. On the

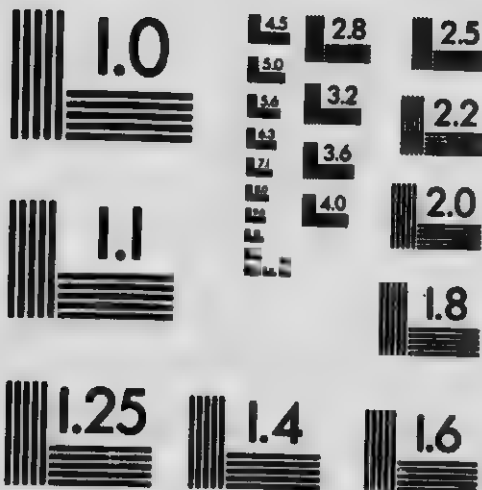
## In Eastern Europe

day of my liberation, I had four invitations to dinner from the officers. I, however, made the most of my time, and escorted by one Captain Northcott, of the Rifles, went over the fortifications, which are most magnificent. I saw everything that I well could, and shall never forget the kindness with which I was treated. The next day I went to Trieste in a steamer, down the whole length of the Adriatic. I was horribly unwell, for the Adriatic is a bad sea, and very dangerous; the weather was also very rough; after stopping at Trieste a day, besides the quarantine, I left for Venice, and here I am, and hope to be on my route again the day after to-morrow. I shall now hurry through Italy by way of Ancona, Rome, and Civita Vecchia to Marseilles in France and from Marseilles to London, in not more than six days' journey. Oh, I shall be so glad to get back to you and my mother (I hope she is alive and well) and Hen. I am glad to hear that we are not to have war with those silly people, the French. The idea made me very uneasy, for I thought how near Oulton lay to the coast. You cannot imagine what a magnificent old town Venice is; it is clearly the finest in Italy, although in decay; it stands upon islands in the sea, and in many places is intersected with canals. The Grand Canal is four miles long, lined with palaces on either side. I, however, shall be glad to leave it, for there is no place to me like Oulton, where live two of my dear ones. I have told you that I am very tired, so that I cannot write much more, and I am presently going to bed, but I am sure that you will be glad to hear from me, however little I may write. I think I told you in my last letter that I had been to the top of Mount Olympus in Thessaly. Tell Hen. that I saw a whole herd of wild deer bounding down the cliffs, the noise they made was like thunder; I also saw an enormous eagle—one of Jupiter's birds, his real eagles, for, according to the Grecian mythology, Olympus was his favourite haunt. I don't know what it was then, but at present the most wild savage place I ever saw; an immense way up I came to a forest of pines; half of them were broken by thunderbolts, snapped in the middle, and the ruins lying around in the most hideous confusion; some had been blasted from top to bottom and stood naked, black, and charred, in indescribable horridness; Jupiter was the god of thunder, and he still seems to haunt Olympus. The worst is there is little water, so that a person might almost perish there of thirst; the snow-water, however, when it runs into the hollows is the most delicious beverage ever tasted—the snow, however, is very high up. My next letter, I hope, will be from Marseilles, and I hope to be there in a very few days. Now, God bless you, my dearest; write to my mother, and kiss Hen., and remember me kindly to Lucy and the Atkinses. G. B.



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# The Life of George Borrow

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, OULTON, LOWESTOFT

ROME, 1 Nov. 1844.

MY DEAREST CARRETA,—My last letter was from Ancona; the present is, as you see, from Rome. From Ancona I likewise wrote to Woodfall requesting he would send a letter of credit for twelve or fifteen pounds, directing to the care of the British Consul at Marseilles. I hope you received your letter and that he received his, as by the time I get to Marseilles I shall be in want of money by reason of the roundabout way I have been obliged to come. I am quite well, thank God, and hope to leave here in a day or two. It is close by the sea, and France is close by, but I am afraid I shall be obliged to wait some days at Marseilles before I shall get the letter, as the post goes direct from no part of Italy, though it is not more than six days' journey, or seven at most, from Ancona to London. It was that wretched quarantine at Corfu that has been the cause of all this delay, as it caused me to lose the passage by the steamer [original torn here] Ancona, which forced me to go round by Trieste and Venice, five hundred miles out of my way, at a considerable expense. Oh, I shall be so glad to get home. As I told you before, I am quite well; indeed, in better health than I have been for years, but it is very vexatious to be stopped in the manner I have been. God bless you, my darling. Write to my mother and kiss her,

G. BORROW.

v. 1844.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### "LAVENGRO"

*The Bible in Spain* bears on its title-page the date 1843. In the intervening eight or nine years he had travelled much—suffered much. During all these years he had been thinking about, talking about, his next book, making no secret of the fact that it was to be an Autobiography. Even before *The Bible in Spain* was issued he had written to Mr. John Murray foreshadowing a book in which his father, William Taylor, and others were to put in an appearance. In the "Advertisement" to *The Romany Rye* he tells us that "the principal part of *Lavengro* was written in the year '43, that the whole of it was completed before the termination of the year '46, and that it was in the hands of the publisher in the year '48." As the idea grew in his mind, his friend, Richard Ford, gave him much sound advice:

Never mind nimminy-pimminy people thinking subjects *low*. Things are low in manner of handling. Draw Nature in rags and poverty, yet draw her truly, and how picturesque! I hate your silver fork, kid glove, curly-haired school.

And so in the following years, now to Ford, now to Murray, he traces his progress, while in 1844 he tells Dawson Turner that he is "at present engaged in a kind of Biography in the Robinson Crusoe style." But in the same year he went to Buda-Pesth, Venice, and Constantinople. The first advertisement of the book appeared in *The Quarterly Review* in July, 1848, when *Lavengro, An Autobiography*, was announced. Later in the same year Mr. Murray advertised the book as *Life, A Drama*; and Dr. Knapp, who had in his collection the original proof-sheets of *Lavengro*, reproduced the title-page of the book which then stood as *Life, A Drama*, and bore the date 1849. Borrow's procrastination in delivering the complete book worried John Murray exceedingly. Not unnaturally, for in 1848 he had offered the book at his annual sale dinner to the booksellers who had

## The Life of George Borrow

subscribed to it liberally. Eighteen months later Murray was still worrying Borrow for the return of the proof-sheets of the third and last volume. Not until January, 1850, do we hear of it as *Lavengro, An Autobiography*, and under this title it was advertised in *The Quarterly Review* for that month as "nearly ready for publication." In April, 1850, we find Woodfall, John Murray's printer, writing letter after letter urging celerity, to which Mrs. Borrow replies, excusing the delay on account of her husband's indifferent health. They have been together in lodgings at Yarmouth. "He had many plunges into the briny Ocean, which seemed to do him good." Murray continued to exhort, but the final chapter did not reach him. "My sale is fixed for December 12th," he writes in November, "and if I cannot show the book then I must throw it up." This threat had little effect, for on 13th December we find Murray still coaxing his dilatory author, telling him with justice that there were passages in his book "equal to Defoe." The very printer, Mr. Woodfall, joined in the chase. "The public is quite prepared to devour your book," he wrote, which was unhappily not the case. Nor was Ford a happier prophet, although a true friend when he wrote—"I am sure it will be the book of the year when it is brought forth." The activity of Mrs. Borrow in this matter of the publication of *Lavengro* is interesting. "My husband . . . is, I assure you, doing all he can as regards the completion of the book," she writes to Mr. Murray in December, 1849, and in November of the following year Murray writes to her to say that he is engraving Phillips's portrait of Borrow for the book. "I think a cheering letter from you will do Mr. Borrow good," she writes later. Throughout the whole correspondence between publisher and printer we are impressed by Mrs. Borrow's keen interest in her husband's book, her anxiety that he should be humoured. Sadly did Borrow need to be humoured, for if he had cherished the illusion that his book would really be the "Book of the Year" he was to suffer a cruel disillusion. Scarcely any one wanted it. All the critics abused it. In *The Athenæum* it was bluntly pronounced a failure. "The story of *Lavengro* will content no one," said Sir William Stirling-Maxwell in *Fraser's Magazine*. The book "will add but little to Mr. Borrow's reputation," said *Blackwood*. The only real insight

## "Lavengro"

into the book's significance was provided by Thomas Gordon Hake in a letter to *The New Monthly Review*, in which journal the editor, Harrison Ainsworth, had already pronounced a not very favourable opinion. "*Lavengro's* roots will strike deep into the soil of English letters," wrote Dr. Hake, and he then pronounced a verdict now universally accepted. George Henry Lewes once happily remarked that he would make an appreciation of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* a test of friendship. Many of us would be almost equally inclined to make such a test of Borrow's *Lavengro*. Tennyson declared that an enthusiasm for Milton's *Lycidas* was a touchstone of taste in poetry. May we not say that an enthusiasm for Borrow's *Lavengro* is now a touchstone of taste in English prose literature?

But the reception of *Lavengro* by the critics, and also by the public, may be said to have destroyed Borrow's moral fibre. Henceforth, it was a soured and disappointed man who went forth to meet the world. We hear much in the gossip of contemporaries of Borrow's eccentricities, it may be of his rudeness and gruffness, in the last years of his life. Only those who can realise the personality of a self-contained man, conscious, as all genius has ever been, of its achievement, and conscious also of the failure of the world to recognise, will understand—and will sympathise.

Borrow, as we have seen, took many years to write *Lavengro*. "I am writing the work," he told Dawson Turner, "in precisely the same manner as *The Biote in Spain*, viz., on blank sheets of old account-books, backs of letters, etc.," and he recalls Mahomet writing the Koran on mutton bones as an analogy to his own "slovenliness of manuscript." I have had plenty of opportunity of testing this slovenliness in the collection of manuscripts of portions of *Lavengro* that have come into my possession. These are written upon pieces of paper of all shapes and sizes, although at least a third of the book in Borrow's very neat handwriting is contained in a leather notebook, of which I give examples of the title-page and opening leaf in facsimile. The title-page demonstrates the earliest form of Borrow's conception. Not only did he then contemplate an undisguised autobiography, but even described himself, as he frequently did in his conversation, as "a Norfolk man." Before the book was finished, however, he repudiated the autobio-

## The Life of George Borrow

graphical note, and by the time he sat down to write *The Romany Rye* we find him fiercely denouncing his critics for coming to such a conclusion. "The writer," he declares, "never said it was an autobiography; never authorised any person to say it was one." Which was doubtless true, in a measure. Yet I find among my Borrow Papers the following letter from Whitwell Elwin, who, writing from Booton Rectory on 21st October, 1853, and addressing him as "My dear Mr. Borrow," said:

I hoped to have been able to call upon you at Yarmouth, but a heavy cold first, and now occupation, have interfered with my intentions. I daresay you have seen the mention made of your *Lavengro* in the article on Haydon in the current number of *The Quarterly Review*, and I thought you might like to know that every syllable, both comment and extract, was inserted by the writer (a man little given to praise) of his own accord. Murray sent him your book, and that was all. No addition or modification was made by myself, and it is therefore the unbiassed judgment of a very critical reviewer. Whenever you appear again before the public I shall endeavour to do ample justice to your past and present merits, and there is one point in which you could aid those who understand you and your books in bringing over general readers to your side. I was myself acquainted with many of the persons you have sketched in your *Lavengro*, and I can testify to the extraordinary vividness and accuracy of the portraits. What I have seen, again, of yourself tells me that romantic adventures are your natural element, and I should *a priori* expect that much of your history would be stranger than fiction. But you must remember that the bulk of readers have no personal acquaintance with you, or the characters you describe. The consequence is that they fancy there is an immensity of romance mixed up with the facts, and they are irritated by the inability to distinguish between them. I am confident, from all I have heard, that this was the source of the comparatively cold reception of *Lavengro*. I should have partaken the feeling myself if I had not had the means of testing the fidelity of many portions of the book, from which I inferred the equal fidelity of the rest. I think you have the remedy in your own hands, viz., by giving the utmost possible matter-of-fact air to your sequel. I do not mean that you are to tame down the truth, but some ways of narrating a story make it seem more credible than others, and if you were so far to defer to the ignorance of the public they would enter into the full spirit of your rich and racy narrative. You naturally look at your life from your own point of view, and this in itself is the best; but when you publish a book you invite the reader to participate in the events of your career, and it is necessary then to look a little at things

## “Lavengro”

from his point of view. As he has not your knowledge you must stoop to him. I throw this out for your consideration. My sole wish is that the public should have a right estimate of you, and surely you ought to do what is in your power to help them to it. I know you will excuse the liberty I take in offering this crude suggestion. Take it for what it is worth, but anyhow . . .

To this letter, as we learn from Elwin's *Life*, “instead of roaring like a lion,” as Elwin had expected, he returned quite a “lamb-like note.”

Read by the light in which we all judge the book to-day, this estimate by Elwin was about as fatuous as most contemporary criticisms of a masterpiece. Which is only to say that it is rarely given to contemporary critics to judge accurately of the great work that comes to them amid a mass that is not great. That Elwin, although not a good editor of Pope, was a sound critic of the literature of a period anterior to his own is demonstrated by the admirable essays from his pen that have been reprinted with an excellent memoir of him by his son. In this memoir we have a capital glimpse of our hero:

Among the notables whom he had met was Borrow, whose *Lavengro* and *Romany Rye* he afterwards reviewed in 1857 under the title of “Roving Life in England.” Their interview was characteristic of both. Borrow was just then very sore with his snarling critics, and on some one mentioning that Elwin was a *quartering* reviewer, he said, “Sir, I wish you a better employment.” Then hastily changing the subject he called out, “What party are you in the Church—Tractarian, Moderate, or Evangelical? I am happy to say I am the old *High*.” “I am happy to say I am *not*,” was Elwin's emphatic reply. Borrow boasted of his proficiency in the Norfolk dialect, which he endeavoured to speak as broadly as possible. “I told him,” said Elwin, “that he had not cultivated it with his usual success.” As the conversation proceeded it became less disputatious, and the two ended by becoming so cordial that they promised to visit each other. Borrow fulfilled his promise in the following October, when he went to Booton, and was “full of anecdote and reminiscence,” and delighted the rectory children by singing them songs in the gypsy tongue. Elwin during this visit urged him to try his hand at an article for the *Review*. “Never,” he said; “I have made a resolution never to have anything to do with such a blackguard trade.”

While writing of Whitwell Elwin and his association with Borrow, which was sometimes rather strained as we

# The Life of George Borrow

shall see when *The Romany Rye* comes to be published, it is interesting to turn to Elwin's final impression of Borrow, as conveyed in a letter which the recipient has kindly placed at my disposal. It was written from Booton Rectory, and is dated 27th October, 1893:

I used occasionally to meet Borrow at the house of Mr Murray, his publisher, and he once stayed with me here for two or three days about 1855. He always seemed to me quite at ease "among refined people," and I should not have ascribed his dogmatic tone, when he adopted it, to his resentment at finding himself out of keeping with his society. A spirit of self-assertion was engrained in him, and it was supported by a combative temperament. As he was proud of his bodily prowess, and rather given to parade it, so he took the same view of an argument as of a battle with fists, and thought that manliness required him to be determined and unflinching. But this, in my experience of him, was not his ordinary manner, which was calm and companionable, without rudeness of any kind, unless some difference occurred to provoke his pugnacity. I have witnessed instances of his care to avoid wounding feelings needlessly. He never kept back his opinions which, on some points, were shallow and even absurd; and when his antagonist was as persistently positive as himself, he was apt to be over-vehement in contradiction. I have heard Mr. Murray say that once in a dispute with Dr. Whewell at a dinner the language on both sides grew so fiery that Mrs. Whewell fainted.

He told me that his composition cost him a vast amount of labour, that his first draughts were diffuse and crude, and that he wrote his productions several times before he had condensed and polished them to his mind. There is nothing choicer in the English language than some of his narratives, descriptions, and sketches of character, but in his best books he did not always prune sufficiently, and in his last work, *Wild Wales*, he seemed to me to have lost the faculty altogether. Mr. Murray long refused to publish it unless it was curtailed, and Borrow, with his usual self-will and self-confidence, refused to retrench the trivialities. Either he got his own way in the end, or he revised his manuscript to little purpose.

Probably most of what there was to tell of Borrow has been related by himself. It is a disadvantage in *Lavengro* and *Romany Rye* that we cannot with certainty separate fact from fiction, for he avowed in talk that, like Goethe, he had assumed the right in the interests of his autobiographical narrative to embellish it in places; but the main outline, and large part of the details, are the genuine record of what he had seen and done, and I can testify that some of his minor personages who were known to me in my boyhood are described with perfect accuracy.

Two letters by Mr. Elwin to Borrow, from my Borrow

## "Lavengro"

Papers, both dated 1853—two years after *Lavengro* was written—may well have place here:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

BOOTON, NORWICH, Oct. 26, 1853.

MY DEAR MR. BORROW,—I shall be rejoiced to see you here, and I hope you will fasten a little luggage to the bow of your saddle, and spend as much time under my roof as you can spare. I am always at home. Mrs. Elwin is sure to be in the house or garden, and I, at the worst, not further off than the extreme boundary of my parish. Pray come and that quickly. Your shortest road from Norwich is through Horsford, and from thence to the park wall of Haverland Hall, which you skirt. This will bring you out by a small wayside public house, well known in these parts, called "The Rat-catchers." At this point you turn sharp to the left, and keep the straight road till you come to a church with a new red brick house adjoining, which is your journey's end.

The conclusion of your note to me is so true in sentiment, and so admirable in expression, that I hope you will introduce it into your next work. I wish it had been said in the article on Haydon. Cannot you strew such criticisms through the sequel to *Lavengro*? They would give additional charm and value to the work. Believe me, very truly yours, W. ELWIN.

You are of course aware that if I had spoken of *Lavengro* in the *Q. R.* I should have said much more, but as I hoped for my turn hereafter, I preferred to let the passage go forth unadulterated.

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

BOOTON RECTORY, NORWICH, Nov. 5, 1853.

MY DEAR MR. BORROW,—You bore your mishap with a philosophic patience, and started with an energy which gives the best earnest that you would arrive safe and sound at Norwich. I was happy to find yesterday morning, by the arrival of your kind present, a sure notification that you were well home. Many thanks for the tea, which we drink with great zest and diligence. My legs are not as long as yours, nor my breath either. You soon made me feel that I must either turn back or be left behind, so I chose the former. Mrs. Elwin and my children desire their kind regards. They one and all enjoyed your visit. Believe me, very truly yours, W. ELWIN.

I have said that I possess large portions of *Lavengro* in manuscript. Borrow's always helpful wife, however, copied

## The Life of George Borrow

out the whole manuscript for the publishers, and this "clean copy" came to Dr. Kapp, who found even here a few pages of very valuable writing deleted, and these he has very rightly restored in Mr. Murray's edition of *Lavengro*. Why Borrow took so much pains to explain that his wife had copied *Lavengro*, as the following document implies, I cannot think. I find in his handwriting this scrap of paper signed by Mary Borrow, and witnessed by her daughter:

Janry. 30, 1869,

This is to certify that I transcribed *The Bible in Spain*, *Lavengro*, and some other works of my husband George Borrow, from the original manuscripts. A considerable portion of the transcript of *Lavengro* was lost at the printing-office where the work was printed.

MARY BORROW.

Witness: Henrietta M., daughter of Mary Borrow.

It only remains here to state the melancholy fact once again that *Lavengro*, great work of literature as it is now universally acknowledged to be, was not "the book of the year." The three thousand copies of the first issue took more than twenty years to sell, and it was not until 1872 that Mr. Murray resolved to issue a cheaper edition. The time was not ripe for the cult of the open road, the zest for "the wind on the heath" that our age shares so keenly.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A VISIT TO CORNISH KIN MEN

IF Borrow had been a normal man of letters he would have been quite satisfied to settle down at Oulton, in a comfortable home, with a devoted wife. The question of money was no longer to worry him. He had moreover a money-making gift, which made him independent in a measure of his wife's fortune. From *The Bible in Spain* he must have drawn a very considerable amount, considerable, that is, for a man whose habits were always somewhat penurious. *The Bible in Spain* would have been followed up, were Borrow a quite other kind of man, by a succession of books almost equally remunerative. Even for one so prone to hate both books and bookmen there was always the wind on the heath, the gypsy encampment, the now famous "broad," not then the haunt of innumerable trippers. But Borrow ever loved wandering more than writing. Almost immediately after his marriage—in 1840—he hinted to the Bible Society of a journey to China; a year later, in June, 1841, he suggested to Lord Clarendon that Lord Palmerston might give him a consulship: he consulted Hasfeld as to a possible livelihood in Berlin, and Ford as to travel in Africa. He seems to have endured residence at Oulton with difficulty during the succeeding three years, and in 1844 we find him engaged upon the continental travel that we have already recorded. In 1847 he had hopes of the consulship at Canton, but Ewring wanted it for himself, and a misunderstanding over this led to an inevitable break of old friendship. Borrow's passionate love of travel was never more to be gratified at the expense of others. He tried, indeed, to secure a journey to the East from the British Museum Trustees, and then gave up the struggle. Further wanderings, which were many, were to be confined to Europe and indeed to England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Isle of Man. His first journey, however, was not at his own initiative. Mrs. Borrow's health was unequal to the severe

# The Life of George Borrow

winters at Oulton, and so the Borrowes made their home at Yarmouth from 1853 to 1860. During these years he gave his vagabond propensities full play. No year passed without its record of wandering. His first expedition was the outcome of a burst of notoriety that seems to have done for Borrow what the success of his *Bible in Spain* could not do—reveal his identity to his Cornish relations. The *Bury Post* of 17th September, 1853, recorded that Borrow had at the risk of his life saved at least one member of a boat's crew wrecked on the coast at Yarmouth:

The moment was an awful one, when George Borrow, the well-known author of *Lavengro* and *The Bible in Spain*, dashed into the surf and saved one life, and through his instrumentality the others were saved. We ourselves have known this brave and gifted man for years, and, daring as was his deed, we have known him more than once to risk his life for others. We are happy to add that he has sustained no material injury.

This paragraph in the Bury St. Edmunds newspaper was copied into the *Plymouth Mail*, and was there read by the Borrowes of Cornwall, who had heard nothing of their relative, Thomas Borrow the army captain, and his family for fifty years or more. One of Borrow's cousins by marriage, Robert Taylor of Penquite, invited him to his father's homeland, and Borrow accepted, glad, we may be sure, of any excuse for a renewal of his wanderings. And so on the 23rd of December, 1853, Borrow made his way from Yarmouth to Plymouth by rail, and thence walked twenty miles to Liskeard, where quite a little party of Borrow's cousins were present to greet him. The Borrow family consisted of Henry Borrow of Looe Down, the father of Mrs. Taylor, William Borrow of Trethinnick, Thomas Nicholas and Elizabeth Borrow, all first cousins, except Anne Taylor. Anne, talking to a friend, describes Borrow on this visit better than any one else has done:

A fine tall man of about six feet three; well-proportioned and not stout; able to walk five miles an hour successively; rather florid face without any hirsute appendages; hair white and soft; eyes and eyebrows dark; good nose and very nice mouth; well-shaped hands;—altogether a person you would notice in a crowd.

Borrow stayed at Penquite with his cousins from 24th

## A Visit to Cornish Kinsmen

December to 9th January, then he went on a walking tour to Land's End, through Truro and Penzance; he was back at Penquite from 26th January to 1st February, and then took a week's tramp to Tintagel, King Arthur's Castle, and Pentire. Naturally he made inquiries into the language, already extinct, but spoken within the memory of the older inhabitants. "My relations are most excellent people," he wrote to his wife from London on his way back, "but I could not understand more than half of what they said."

I have only one letter to Mrs. Borrow written during this tour:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

PENQUITE, 27th Janry. 1854.

MY DEAR CARRETA,—I just write you a line to inform you that I have got back safe here from the Land's End. I have received your two letters, and hope you received mine from the Land's End. It is probable that I shall yet visit one or two places before I leave Cornwall. I am very much pleased with the country. When you receive this if you please write a line by return of post I think you may; the Trethinnick people wish me to stay with them for a day or two. When you see the Cobbs pray remember me to them; I am sorry Horace has lost his aunt, he will miss her. Love to Hen. Ever yours,  
G. BORROW.

(Keep this.)

It was the failure of *The Romany Rye* that prevented Borrow from writing the Cornish book that he had caused to be advertised in the flyleaf of that work. Borrow would have made a beautiful book upon Cornwall. Even the title, *Penquite and Pentyre; or, The Head of the Forest and the Headland*, has music in it. And he had in these twenty weeks made himself wonderfully well acquainted not only with the topography of the principality, but with its folklore and legend. The gulf that ever separated the Borrow of the notebook and the unprepared letter from the Borrow of the finished manuscript was extraordinary, and we may deplore with Mr. Walling the absence of this among Borrow's many unwritten books.

Borrow was back in Yarmouth at the end of February, 1854—he had not fled the country as Dalrymple had

## The Life of George Borrow

suggested—but in July he was off again for his great tour in Wales, in which he was accompanied by his wife and daughter. Of that tour we must treat in another and later chapter, for *Wild Wales* was not published until 1862. The year following his great tour in Wales he went on a trip to the Isle of Man.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### IN THE ISLE OF MAN

THE holiday which Borrow gave himself the year following his visit to Wales, that is to say, in September, 1855, is recorded in his unpublished diaries. He never wrote a book as the outcome of that journey, although he caused one to be advertised under the title of *Bayr Jaargey and Glion Doo: Wanderings in Search of Manx Literature*. Borrow, it will be remembered, learnt the Irish language as a mere child, much to his father's disgust. Although he never loved the Irish people, the Celtic Irish, that is to say, whose genial temperament was so opposed to his own, he did love the Irish language, which he more than once declared had incited him to become a student of many tongues. He never made the mistake into which so many have fallen of calling it "Erse." He was never an accurate student of the Irish language, but among Englishmen he led the way in the present-day interest in that tongue—an interest which is now so pronounced among scholars of many nationalities, and has made in Ireland so definite a revival of a language that for a time seemed to be on the way to extinction. Two translations from the Irish are to be found in his *Targum* published so far back as 1835, and many other translations from the Irish poets were among the unpublished manuscripts that he left behind him. It would therefore be with peculiar interest that he would visit the Isle of Man which, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was an Irish-speaking land, but in 1855 was at a stage when the language was falling fast into decay. What survived of it was still Irish with trifling variations in the spelling of words. "Cranu," a tree, for example, had become "Cwan," and so on—although the pronunciation was apparently much the same. When the tall, white-haired Englishman talked to the older inhabitants who knew something of the language they were delighted.

## The Life of George Borrow

"Mercy upon us," said one old woman, "I believe, sir, you are of the old Manx!" Borrow was actually wandering in search of Manx literature, as the title of the book that he announced implied. He inquired about the old songs of the island, and of everything that survived of its earlier language. Altogether Borrow must have had a good time in thus following his favourite pursuit.

But these stories are less human than a notebook in my hands. This is a long leather pocket-book, in which, under the title of "Expedition to the Isle of Man," we have, written in pencil, a quite vivacious account of his adventures. It records that Borrow and his wife and daughter set out through Bury to Peterborough, Rugby, and Liverpool. It tells of the admiration with which Peterborough's "noble cathedral" inspired him. Liverpool he calls a "London in miniature":

Strolled about town with my wife and Henrietta; wonderful docks and quays, where all the ships of the world seemed to be gathered—all the commerce of the world to be carried on; St. George's Crescent; noble shops; strange people walking about, an Herculean mulatto, for example; the old china shop; cups with Chinese characters upon them; an horrible old Irishwoman with naked feet; Assize Hall a noble edifice.

The party left Liverpool on 20th August, and Borrow, when in sight of the Isle of Man, noticed a lofty ridge of mountains rising to the clouds:

Entered into conversation with two of the crew—Manx sailors—about the Manx language; one, a very tall man, said he knew only a very little of it as he was born on the coast, but that his companion, who came from the interior, knew it well; said it was a mere gibberish. This I denied, and said it was an ancient language, and that it was like the Irish; his companion, a shorter man, in shirt sleeves, with a sharp, eager countenance, now opened his mouth and said I was right, and said that I was the only gentleman whom he had ever heard ask questions about the Manx language. I spoke several Irish words which they understood.

When he had landed he continued his investigations, asking every peasant he met the Manx for this or that English word:

"Are you Manx?" said I. "Yes," he replied, "I am Manx." "And what do you call a river in Manx?" "A river," he

## In the Isle of Man

replied. "Can you speak Manx?" I demanded. "Yes," he replied, "I speak Manx." "And you call a river a river?" "Yes," said he, "I do." "You don't call it owen?" said I. "I do not," said he. I passed on, and on the other side of the bridge went for some time along an avenue of trees, passing by a stone water-mill, till I came to a public-house on the left hand. Seeing a woman looking out of the window, I asked her to what place the road led. "To Castletown," she replied. "And what do you call the river in Manx?" said I. "We call it an owen," said she. "So I thought," I replied, and after a little further discourse returned, as the night was now coming fast on.

One man whom Borrow asked if there were any poets in Man replied that he did not believe there were, that the last Manx poet had died some time ago at Kirk Conoshine, and this man had translated Parnell's *Hermit* beautifully, and the translation had been printed. He inquired about the Runic Stones, which he continually transcribed. Under date Thursday, 30th August, we find the following:

This day year I ascended Snowdon, and this morning, which is very fine, I propose to start on an expedition to Castletown and to return by Peel.

Very gladly would I follow Borrow more in detail through this interesting holiday by means of his diary,<sup>1</sup> but it would make my book too long. As he had his wife and daughter with him there are no letters by him from the island.

Three years later we find that Borrow has not forgotten the friends of that Manx holiday. This letter is from the Vicar of Malew in acknowledgment of a copy of *The Romany Rye* published in the interval:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

MALEW VICARAGE, BALLASALLA,  
ISLE OF MAN, 27 Jany. 1859.

MY DEAR SIR,—I return you my most hearty thanks for your most handsome present of *Romany Rye*, and no less handsome letter relative to your tour in the Isle of Man and the literature of the Manx. Both I value very highly, and from both I shall derive useful hints for my introduction to the new edition of the *Manx Grammar*. I hope you will have no objection

<sup>1</sup> The whole of this diary will be issued in my edition of *The Collected Works*. It has appeared, with my permission, in the *Manx Folk Lore Magazine*, *Mannin*, November, 1914.

## The Life of George Borrow

to my quoting a passage or two from the advertisement of your forthcoming book; and if I receive no intimation of your dissent, I shall take it for granted that I have your kind permission. The whole notice is so apposite to my purpose, and would be so interesting to every Manxman, that I would fain insert the whole bodily, did the Author and the limits of an Introduction permit. The *Grammar* will, I think, go to press in March next. It is to be published under the auspices of "The Manx Society," instituted last year "for the publication of National documents of the Isle of Man." As soon as it is printed I hope to beg the favour of your acceptance of a copy.—I am, my dear Sir, your deeply obliged humble servant,

WILLIAM GILL.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### OULTON BROAD AND YARMOUTH

GEORGE BORROW wandered far and wide, but he always retraced his footsteps to East Anglia, of which he was so justly proud. From his marriage in 1840 until his death in 1881 he lived twenty-seven years at Oulton or at Yarmouth. "It is on sand alone that the sea strikes its true music," Borrow once remarked, "Norfolk sand"—and it was in the waves and on the sands of the Norfolk coast that Borrow spent the happiest hours of his restless life. Oulton Cottage is only about two miles from Lowestoft, and so, walking or driving, these places were quite near one another. But both are in Suffolk. Was it because Yarmouth—ten miles distant—is in Norfolk that it was always selected for seaside residence? I suspect that the careful Mrs. Borrow found a wider selection of "apartments" at a moderate price. In any case the sea air of Yarmouth was good for his wife, and the sea bathing was good for him, and so we find that husband and wife had seven separate residences at Yarmouth during the years of Oulton life.<sup>1</sup> But Oulton was ever to be Borrow's headquarters, even though between 1860 and 1874 he had a house in London. Borrow was thirty-seven years of age when he settled down at Oulton. He was, he tells us in *The Romany Rye*, "in tolerably easy circumstances and willing to take some rest after a life of labour." Their home was a cottage on the Broad, for the Hall, which was also Mrs. Borrow's property, was let on lease to a farmer. The cottage, however, was an extremely pleasant residence with a lawn running down to the river. A more substantial house has been built on this site since Borrow's day. The summer-house is generally assumed to be the same, but has

<sup>1</sup> They lived first at 169 King Street, then at two addresses unknown, then successively at 37, 38 and 39 Camperdown Terrace; their last address was 28 Trafalgar Place.

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certainly been re-roofed since the time when Henrietta Clarke drew the picture of it that is reproduced in this book. Probably the whole summer-house is new, but at any rate the present structure stands on the site of the old one. Here Borrow did his work, wrote and wrote and wrote, until he had, as he said, "mountains of manuscripts." Here first of all he completed *The Zincali* (1841), commenced in Seville; then he wrote or rather arranged *The Bible in Spain* (1843), and then at long intervals, diversified by extensive travel holidays, he wrote *Lavengro* (1851), *The Romany Rye* (1857), and *Wild Wales* (1860)—these are the five books and their dates that we most associate with Borrow's sojourn at Oulton. When *Wild Wales* was published he had removed to London.

By far the best glimpses of Borrow during these years of Suffolk life are those contained in a letter contributed by his friend, Elizabeth Harvey, to *The Eastern Daily Press* of Norwich over the initials "E.H.":

When I knew Mr. Borrow he lived in a lovely cottage whose garden sloped down to the edge of Oulton Broad. He had a wooden room built on the very margin of the water, where he had many strange old books in various languages. I remember he once put one before me, telling me to read it. "Oh, I can't," I replied. He said, "You ought, it's your own language." It was an old Saxon book. He used to spend a great deal of his time in this room writing, translating, and at times singing strange words in a stentorian voice, while passers-by on the lake would stop to listen with astonishment and curiosity to the singular sounds. He was 6 feet 3 inches, a splendid man, with handsome hands and feet. He wore neither whiskers, beard, nor moustache. His features were very handsome, but his eyes were peculiar, being round and rather small, but very piercing, and now and then fierce. He would sometimes sing one of his Romany songs, shake his fist at me and look quite wild. Then he would ask, "Aren't you afraid of me?" "No, not at all," I would say. Then he would look just as gentle and kind, and say, "God bless you, I would not hurt a hair of your head." He was an expert swimmer, and used to go out bathing, and dive under water an immense time. On one occasion he was bathing with a friend, and after plunging in nothing was seen of him for some while. His friend began to be alarmed, when he heard Borrow's voice a long way off exclaiming, "There, if that had been written in one of my books they would have said it was a lie, wouldn't they?" He was very fond of animals, and the animals were fond of him. He would go for a walk with two dogs and a cat following him. The

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cat would go a quarter of a mile or so and then turn back home. He delighted to go for long walks and enter into conversation with any one he might meet on the road, and lead them into histories of their lives, belongings, and experiences. When they used some word peculiar to Norfolk (or Suffolk) countrymen he would say, "Why, that's a Danish word." By and by the man would use another peculiar expression, "Why, that's Saxon"; a little later on another, "Why, that's French." And he would add, "Why, what a wonderful man you are to speak so many languages." One man got very angry, but Mr. Borrow was quite unconscious that he had given any offence. He spoke a great number of languages, and at the Exhibition of 1851, whither he went with his stepdaughter, he spoke to the different foreigners in their own language, until his daughter saw some of them whispering together and looking as if they thought he was "uncanny," and she became alarmed and drew him away. He, however, did not like to hear the English language adulterated with the introduction of foreign words. If his wife or friends used a foreign word in conversation, he would say, "What's that, trying to come over me with strange languages."

I have gone for many a walk with him at Oulton. He used to go on, singing to himself or quite silent, quite forgetting me until he came to a high hill, when he would turn round, seize my hand, and drag me up. Then he would sit down and enjoy the prospect. He was a great lover of nature, and very fond of his trees. He quite fretted if, by some mischance, he lost one. He did not shoot or hunt. He rode his Arab at times, but walking was his favourite exercise. He was subject to fits of nervous depression. At times also he suffered from sleeplessness, when he would get up and walk to Norwich (25 miles), and return the next night recovered. His fondness for the gypsies has been noticed. At Oulton he used to allow them to encamp in his grounds, and he would visit them, with a friend or alone, talk to them in Romany, and sing Romany songs. He was very fond of ghost stories and believed in the supernatural. He was keenly sympathetic with any one who was in trouble or suffering. He was no man of business and very guileless, and led a very harmless, quiet life at Oulton, spending his evenings at home with his wife and step-daughter, generally reading all the evening. He was very hospitable in his own home, and detested meanness. He was moderate in eating and drinking, took very little breakfast, but ate a very great quantity at dinner, and then had only a draught of cold water before going to bed. He wrote much in praise of "strong ale," and was very fond of good ale, of whose virtue he had a great idea. Once I was speaking of a lady who was attached to a gentleman, and he asked, "Well, did he make her an offer?" "No," I said. "Ah," he exclaimed, "if she had given him some good ale he would." But although he talked so much about ale I never saw him take much. He was very temperate, and would eat what was set before him, often not thinking of what

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he was doing, and he never refused what was offered him. He took much pleasure in music, especially of a light and lively character. My sister would sing to him, and I played. One piece he seemed never to tire of hearing. It was a polka, "The Redowa," I think, and when I had finished he used to say, "Play that again, E——." He was very polite and gentlemanly in ladies' society, and we all liked him.

It is refreshing to read this tribute, from which I have omitted nothing salient, because a very disagreeable Borrow has somehow grown up into a tradition. I note in reading some of the reviews of Dr. Knapp's *Life* that he is charged, or half-charged, with suppressing facts, "because they do not reflect credit upon the subject of his biography." Now, there were really no facts to suppress. Borrow was at times a very irritable man, he was a very self-centred one. His egotism might even be pronounced amazing by those who had never met an author. But those of us who have, recognise that with very few exceptions they are all egotists, although some conceal it from the unobservant more deftly than others. Many authors of power have died young and unrecognised; but recognition has usually come to those men of genius who have lived into middle age. It did not come to Borrow. He had therefore a right to be soured. This sourness found expression in many ways. Borrow, most sound of churchmen, actually quarrelled with his vicar over the tempers of their respective dogs. Both the vicar, the Rev. Edwin Proctor Denniss, and his parishioner wrote one another acrid letters. Here is Borrow's parting shot:

Circumstances over which Mr. Borrow has at present no control will occasionally bring him and his family under the same roof with Mr. Denniss; that roof, however, is the roof of the House of God, and the prayers of the Church of England are wholesome from whatever mouth they may proceed.

Surely that is a kind of quarrel we have all had in our day, and we think ourselves none the less virtuous in consequence. Then there was Borrow's very natural ambition to be made a magistrate of Suffolk. He tells Mr. John Murray in 1842 that he has caught a bad cold by getting up at night in pursuit of poachers and thieves. "A terrible neighbourhood this," he adds, "not a magistrate dare do

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his duty." And so in the next year he wrote again to the same correspondent:

Present my compliments to Mr. Gladstone, and tell him that the *Bible in Spain* will have no objection to becoming one of the "Great Unpaid."

Mr. Gladstone, although he had admired *The Bible in Spain*, and indeed had even suggested the modification of one of its sentences, did nothing. Lockhart, Lord Clarendon, and others who were applied to were equally powerless or indifferent. Borrow never got his magistracy. To-day no man of equal eminence in literature could possibly have failed of so slight an ambition. Moreover, Borrow wanted to be a J.P., not from mere snobbery as many might, but for a definite, practical object. I am afraid he would not have made a very good magistrate, and perhaps inquiry had made that clear to the authorities. Lastly, there was Borrow's quarrel with the railway which came through his estate. He had thoughts of removing to Bury, where Dr. Hake lived, or to Troston Hall, once the home of the interesting Capell Lofft. But he was not to leave Oulton. In intervals of holidays, journeys, and of sojourn in Yarmouth it was to remain his home to the end. In 1849 his mother joined him at Oulton. She had resided for thirty-three years at the Willow Lane Cottage. She was now seventy-seven years of age. She lived on near her son as a tenant of his tenant at Oulton Hall until her death nine years later, dying in 1858 in her eighty-seventh year. She lies buried in Oulton Churchyard, with a tomb thus inscribed:

Sacred to the memory of Ann Borrow, widow of Captain Thomas Borrow. She died on the 16th of August 1858, aged eighty-six years and seven months. She was a good wife and a good mother.

During these years at Oulton we have many glimpses of Borrow. Dr. Jessopp, for example, has recorded in *The Athenæum* newspaper his own hero-worship for the author of *Lavengro*, whom he was never to meet. This enthusiasm for *Lavengro* was shared by certain of his Norfolk friends of those days:

Among those friends were two who, I believe, are still alive, and who about the year 1846 set out, without telling me of

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their intention, on a pilgrimage to Oulton to see George Borrow in the flesh. In those days the journey was not an inconsiderable one; and though my friends must have known that I would have given my ears to be of the party, I suppose they kept their project to themselves for reasons of their own. Two, they say, are company and three are none; two men could ride in a gig for sixty miles without much difficulty, and an odd man often spoils sport. At any rate, they left me out, and one day they came back full of malignant pride and joy and exultation, and they flourished their information before me with boastings and laughter at my ferocious jealousy; for they had seen, and talked with, and eaten and drunk with, and sat at the feet of the veritable George Borrow, and had grasped his mighty hand. To me it was too provoking. But what had they to tell?

They found him at Oulton, living, as they affirmed, in a house which belonged to Mrs. Borrow and which her first husband had left her. The household consisted of himself, his wife, and his wife's daughter; and among his other amusements he employed himself in training some young horses to follow him about like dogs and come at the call of his whistle. As my two friends were talking with him Borrow sounded his whistle in a paddock near the house, which, if I remember rightly, was surrounded by a low wall. Immediately two beautiful horses came bounding over the fence and trotted up to their master. One put his nose into Borrow's outstretched hand and the other kept snuffing at his pockets in expectation of the usual bribe for confidence and good behaviour. Borrow could not but be flattered by the young Cambridge men paying him the frank homage they offered, and he treated them with the robust and cordial hospitality characteristic of the man. One or two things they learnt which I do not feel at liberty to repeat.

Mr. Arthur W. Upcher of Sheringham Hall, Cromer, also provided in *The Athenæum* a quaint reminiscence of Borrow in which he recalled that Lavengro had called upon Miss Anna Gurney. This lady had, assuredly with less guile, treated him much as Frances Cobbe would have done. She had taken down an Arabic grammar, and put it into his hand, asking for explanation of some difficult point which he tried to decipher; but meanwhile she talked to him continuously. "I could not," said Borrow, "study the Arabic grammar and listen to her at the same time, so I threw down the book and ran out of the room." He soon after met Mr. Upcher, to whom he made an interesting revelation:

He told us there were three personages in the world whom

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he had always a desire to see; two of these had slipped through his fingers, so he was determined to see the third. "Pray, Mr. Borrow, who were they?" He held up three fingers of his left hand and pointed them off with the forefinger of the right: the first Daniel O'Connell, the second Lamplighter (the sire of Phosphorus, Lord Berners's winner of the Derby), the third, Anna Gurney. The first two were dead and he had not seen them; now he had come to see Anna Gurney, and this was the end of his visit.

At one moment of the correspondence we obtain an interesting glimpse of a great man of science. Mr. Darwin sent the following inquiry through Dr. Hooker, afterwards Sir Joseph Hooker, and it reached Borrow through his friend Thomas Brightwell:

Is there any Dog in Spain closely like our English Pointer, in *shape* and size, and *habits*,—namely in pointing, backing, and not giving tongue. Might I be permitted to quote Mr. Borrow's answer to the query? Has the improved English pointer been introduced into Spain?  
C. DARWIN.

Borrow took constant holidays during these Oulton days. We have elsewhere noted his holidays in Eastern Europe, in the Isle of Man, in Wales, and in Cornwall. Letters from other parts of England would be welcome, but I can only find two, and these are but scraps. Both are addressed to his wife, each without date:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

OXFORD, Feb. 2nd.

DEAR CARRETA,—I reached this place yesterday and hope to be home to-night (Monday). I walked the whole way by Kingston, Hampton, Sunbury (Miss Oriel's place), Windsor, Wallingford, etc., a good part of the way was by the Thames. There has been much wet weather. Oxford is a wonderful place. Kiss Hen., and God bless you!

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

TUNBRIDGE WELLS, Tuesday evening.

DEAR CARRETA,—I have arrived here safe—it is a wonderful place, a small city of palaces amidst hills, rocks, and is full of fine people. Please to carry up stairs and lock in the drawer the little paper sack of letters in the parlour, lock

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it up with the bank book and put this along with it—also be sure to keep the window of my room fastened and the door locked, and keep the key in your pocket. God bless you and Hen.  
GEORGE BORROW.

One of the very last letters of Borrow that I possess is to an unknown correspondent. It is from a rough "draft" in his handwriting:

OULTON, LOWESTOFT, May 1875.

SIR.—Your letter of the eighth o. March I only lately received. Otherwise I should have answered it sooner. In it you mention Chamberlayne's work, containing versions of the Lord's Prayer translated into a hundred languages, and ask whether I can explain why the one which purports to be a rendering into Waldensian is evidently made in some dialect of the Gaelic. To such explanation as I can afford you are welcome, though perhaps you will not deem it very satisfactory. I have been acquainted with Chamberlayne's work for upwards of forty years. I first saw it at St. Petersburg in 1834, and the translation in question very soon caught my attention. I at first thought that it was an attempt at imposition, but I soon relinquished that idea. I remembered that Helvetia was a great place for Gaelic. I do not mean in the old time when the Gael possessed the greater part of Europe, but at a long subsequent period: Switzerland was converted to Christianity by Irish monks, the most active and efficient of whom was Gall. These people founded schools in which together with Christianity the Irish or Gaelic language was taught. In process of time, though the religion flourished, the Helveto Gaelic died away, but many pieces in that tongue survived, some of which might still probably be found in the recesses of St. Gall. The noble abbey is named after the venerable apostle of Christianity in Helvetia; so I deemed it very possible that the version in question might be one of the surviving fruits of Irish missionary labour in Helvetia, not but that I had my doubts, and still have, principally from observing that the language though certainly not modern does not exhibit any decided marks of high antiquity. It is much to be regretted that Chamberlayne should have given the version to the world under a title so calculated to perplex and mislead as that which it bears, and without even stating how or where he obtained it. This, sir, is all I have to say on the very obscure subject about which you have done me the honour to consult me.—Yours truly,

GEORGE BORROW.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### IN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

BORROW has himself given us—in *Lavengro*—a picturesque record of his early experiences in Scotland. It is passing strange that he published no account of his two visits to the North in maturer years. Why did he not write *Wild Scotland* as a companion volume to *Wild Wales*? He preserved in little leather pocket-books or leather-covered exercise-books copious notes of both tours. Two of his notebooks came into the possession of the late Dr. Knapp, Borrow's first biographer, and are thus described in his Bibliography:

*Note Book of a Tour in Scotland, the Orkneys and Shetland*  
1. and Dec. 1858. 1 large vol. leather.

*The Book of Tours around Belfast and the Scottish Borders*  
from Stranraer to Berwick-upon-Tweed in July and August 1866.  
1 v. leather.

Of these Dr. Knapp made use only to give the routes of Borrow's journeys so far as he was able to interpret them. It may be that he was doubtful as to whether his purchase of the manuscript carried with it the copyright of its contents, as it assuredly did not; it may be that he quailed before the minute and almost undecipherable handwriting. But similar notebooks are in my possession, and there are, happily, in these days typists—you pay them by the hour, and it means an infinity of time and patience—who will copy the most minute and the most obscure documents. There are some of the notebooks of the Scottish tour of 1858 before me, and what is of far more importance—Borrow's letters to his wife while on this tour. Borrow lost his mother in August, 1858, and this event was naturally a great blow to his heart. A week or two later he suffered a cruel blow to his pride also, nothing less than the return of the manuscript of his much-prized translation from the Welsh of *The Sleeping Bard*—and this by his "prince of

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publishers," John Murray. "There is no money in it," said the publisher, and he was doubtless right. The two disasters were of different character, but both unhinged him. He had already written *Wild Wales*, although it was not to be published for another four years. He had caused to be advertised—in 1857—a book on Cornwall, but it was never written in any definitive form, and now our author had lost heart, and the Cornish book—*Penquite and Pentyre*—and the Scots book never saw the light. In these autumn months of 1858 geniality and humour had parted from Borrow; this his diary makes clear. He was ill. His wife urged a tour in Scotland, and he prepared himself for a rough, simple journey, of a kind quite different from the one in Wales. The north of Scotland in the winter was scarcely to be thought of for his wife and step-daughter Henrietta. He tells us in one of these diaries that he walked "several hundred miles in the Highlands." His wife and daughter were with him in Wales, as every reader of *Wild Wales* will recall, but the Scots tour was meant to be a more formidable pilgrimage, and they went to Great Yarmouth instead. The first half of the tour—that of September—is dealt with in letters to his wife, the latter half is reflected in his diary. The letters show Borrow's experiences in the earlier part of his journey, and from his diaries we learn that he was in Oban on 22nd October, Aberdeen on 5th November, Inverness on the 9th, and thence he went to Tain, Dornoch, Wick, John o' Groat's, and to the island towns, Stromness, Kirkwall, and Lerwick. He was in Shetland on the 1st of December—altogether a bleak, cheerless journey, we may believe, even for so hardy a tramp as Borrow, and the tone of the following extract from one of his rough notebooks in my possession may perhaps be explained by the circumstance. Borrow is on the way to Loch Laggan and visits a desolate churchyard, Coll Harrie, to see the tomb of John Macdonnel or Ian Lom:

I was on a Highland hill in an old Popish burying-ground. I entered the ruined church, disturbed a rabbit crouching under an old tombstone—it ran into a hole, then came out running about like wild—quite frightened—made room for it to run out by the doorway, telling it I would not hurt it—went out again and examined the tombs. . . . Would have

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examined much more but the wind and rain blew horribly, and I was afraid that my hat, if not my head, would be blown into the road over the hill. Quitted the place of old Highland Popish devotion—descended the hill again with great difficulty—grass slippery and the ground here and there quaggy, resumed the road—village—went to the door of house looking down the valley—to ask its name—knock—people came out, a whole family, looking sullen and all savage. The stout, tall young man with the grey savage eyes—civil questions—half-savage answers—village's name Achalarach—the neighbourhood—all Catholic—chiefly Macdonnells; said the English, *my countrymen*, had taken the whole country—"but not without paying for it," I replied—said I was soaking wet with a kind of sneer, but never asked me in. I said I cared not for wet. A savage, brutal Papist and a hater of the English—the whole family with bad countenances—a tall woman in the background probably the mother of them all. Bade him good-day, he made no answer and I went away. Learnt that the river's name was Spean.

He passed through Scotland in a disputative vein, which could not have made him a popular traveller. He tells a Roman Catholic of the Macdonnell clan to read his Bible and "trust in Christ, not in the Virgin Mary and graven images." He went up to another man who accosted him with the remark that "It is a soft day," and said, "You should not say a 'soft' day, but a wet day." Even the Spanish, for whom he had so much contempt and scorn when he returned from the Peninsula, are "in many things a wise people"—after his experiences of the Scots. There is abundance of Borrow's prejudice, intolerance, and charm in this fragment of a diary; but the extract I have given is of additional interest as showing how Borrow wrote all his books. The notebooks that he wrote in Spain and Wales were made up of similar disjointed jottings. Here is a note of more human character interspersed with Borrow's diatribes upon the surliness of the Scots. He is at Invergarry, on the banks of Loch Oich. It is the 5th of October:

Dinner of real haggis; meet a conceited schoolmaster. This night, or rather in the early morning, I saw in the dream of my sleep my dear departed mother—she appeared to be coming out of her little sleeping-room at Oulton Hall—overjoyed I gave a cry and fell down at her knee, but my agitation was so great that it burst the bonds of sleep, and I awoke.

But the letters to Mrs. Borrow are the essential documents

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here, and not the copious diaries which I hope to publish elsewhere. The first letter to "Carreta" is from Edinburgh, where Borrow arrived on Sunday, 19th September, 1858:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, 38 CAMPERDOWN PLACE,  
YARMOUTH, NORFOLK.

EDINBURGH, *Sunday (Sept. 19th, 1858).*

DEAR CARRETA,—I just write a line to inform you that I arrived here yesterday quite safe. We did not start from Yarmouth till past three o'clock on Thursday morning; we reached Newcastle about ten on Friday. As I was walking in the street at Newcastle a sailor-like man came running up to me, and begged that I would let him speak to me. He appeared almost wild with joy. I asked him who he was, and he told me he was a Yarmouth north beach man, and that he knew me very well. Before I could answer, another sailor-like, short, thick fellow came running up, who also seemed wild with joy; he was a comrade of the other. I never saw two people so out of themselves with pleasure, they literally danced in the street; in fact, they were two of my old friends. I asked them how they came down there, and they told me that they had been down fishing. They begged a thousand pardons for speaking to me, but told me they could not help it. I set off for Alnwick on Friday afternoon, stayed there all night, and saw the castle next morning. It is a fine old place, but at present is undergoing repairs—a Scottish king was killed before its walls in the old time. At about twelve I started for Edinburgh. The place is wonderfully altered since I was here, and I don't think for the better. There is a Runic stone on the castle brae which I am going to copy. It was not there in my time. If you write direct to me at the Post Office, Inverness. I am thinking of going to Glasgow to-morrow, from which place I shall start for Inverness by one of the packets which go thither by the North-West and the Caledonian Canal. I hope that you and Hen. are well and comfortable. Pray eat plenty of grapes and partridges. We had upon the whole a pleasant passage from Yarmouth; we lived plainly but well, and I was not at all ill—the captain seemed a kind, honest creature. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Turnour and Mrs. Clarke, and God bless you and Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

In his unpublished diary Borrow records his journey from Glasgow through beautiful but over-described scenery to Inverness, where he stayed at the Caledonian Hotel:

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TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, 38 CAMPERDOWN PLACE,  
YARMOUTH

INVERNESS, *Sunday (Sept. 26th).*

DEAR CARRETA,—This is the third letter which I have written to you. Whether you have received the other two, or will receive this, I am doubtful. I have been several times to the post office, but we found no letter from you, though I expected to find one awaiting me when I arrived. I wrote last on Friday. I merely want to know once how you are, and if all is well I shall move onward. It is of not much use staying here. After I had written to you on Friday I crossed by the ferry over the Firth and walked to Beauly, and from thence to Beaufort or Castle Downie; at Beauly I saw the gate of the pit where old Fraser used to put the people whom he owed money to—it is in the old ruined cathedral, and at Beaufort saw the ruins of the house where he was born. Lord Lovat lives in the house close by. There is now a claimant to the title, a descendant of Old Fraser's elder brother who committed a murder in the year 1690, and on that account fled to South Wales. The present family are rather uneasy, and so are their friends, of whom they have a great number, for though they are flaming Papists they are very free of their money. I have told several of their cousins that the claimant has not a chance as the present family have been so long in possession. They almost blessed me for saying so. There, however, can be very little doubt that the title and estate, more than a million acres, belong to the claimant by strict law. Old Fraser's brother was called Black John of the Tasser. The man whom he killed was a piper who sang an insulting song to him at a wedding. I have heard the words and have translated them; he was dressed very finely, and the piper sang:

"You're dressed in Highland robes, John,  
But ropes of straw would become ye better;  
You've silver buckles your shoes upon  
But leather thongs for them were fitter."

Whereupon John drew his dagger and ran it into the piper's belly; the descendants of the piper are still living at Beauly. I walked that day thirty-four miles between noon and ten o'clock at night. My letter of credit is here. This is a dear place, but not so bad as Edinburgh. *If you have written*, don't write any more till you hear from me again. God bless you and Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

"Swindled out of a shilling by rascally ferryman," is Borrow's note in his diary of the episode that he relates to his wife of crossing the Firth. He does not tell her, but

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his diary tells us, that he changed his inn on the day he wrote this letter: the following jottings from the diary cover the period:

*Sept. 29th.*—Quit the "Caledonian" for "Union Sun"—poor accommodation—could scarcely get anything to eat—unpleasant day. Walked by the river—at night saw the comet again from the bridge.

*Sept. 30th.*—Breakfast. The stout gentleman from Caithness, Mr. John Miller, gave me his card—show him mine—his delight.

*Oct. 1st.*—Left Inverness for Fort Augustus by steamer—passengers—strange man—tall gentleman—half doctor—breakfast—dreadful hurricane of wind and rain—reach Fort Augustus—inn—apartments—Edinburgh ale—stroll over the bridge to a wretched village—wind and rain—return—fall asleep before fire—dinner—herrings, first-rate—black ale, Highland mutton—pudding and cream—stroll round the fort—wet grass—stormy-like—wind and rain—return—kitchen—kind, intelligent woman from Dornoch—no Gaelic—shows me a Gaelic book of spiritual songs by one Robertson—talks to me about Alexander Cumming, a fat blacksmith and great singer of Gaelic songs.

But to return to Borrow's letters to his wife:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, 38 CAMPERDOWN TERRACE,  
GT. YARMOUTH

INVERNESS, *September 29th, 1858.*

MY DEAR CA' RETA, — I have got your letter, and glad enough I was to get it. The day after to-morrow I shall depart from here for Fort Augustus at some distance up the lake. After staying a few days there, I am thinking of going to the Isle of Mull, but I will write to you if possible from Fort Augustus. I am rather sorry that I came to Scotland—I was never in such a place in my life for cheating and imposition, and the farther north you go the worse things seem to be, and yet I believe it is possible to live very cheap here, that is if you have a house of your own and a wife to go out and make bargains, for things are abundant enough, but if you move about you are at the mercy of innkeepers and suchlike people. The other day I was swindled out of a shilling by a villain to whom I had given it for change. I ought, perhaps, to have had him up before a magistrate provided I could have found one, but I was in a wild place and he had a clan about him, and if I had had him up I have no doubt I should have been outsworn. I, however, have met one fine, noble old fellow. The other night I lost my way amongst horrible moors and wandered for miles and miles without seeing a soul. At last I saw a light which came from the window of a rude hovel. I tapped

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at the window and shouted, and at last an old man came out; he asked me what I wanted, and I told him I had lost my way. He asked me where I came from and where I wanted to go, and on my telling him he said I had indeed lost my way, for I had got out of it at least four miles, and was going away from the place I wanted to get to. He then said he would show me the way, and went with me several miles over most horrible places. At last we came to a road where he said he thought he might leave me, and wished me good-night. I gave him a shilling. He was very grateful and said, after considering, that as I had behaved so handsomely to him he would not leave me yet, as he thought it possible I might yet lose my way. He then went with me three miles farther, and I have no doubt that, but for him, I should have lost my way again, the roads were so tangled. I never saw such an old fellow, or one whose conversation was so odd and entertaining. This happened last Monday night, the night of the day in which I had been swindled of the shilling by the other; I could write a history about those two shillings.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, 39 CAMPERDOWN TERRACE,  
GT. YARMOUTH

INVERNESS, 30th September 1858.

DEAR CARRETA,—I write another line to tell you that I have got your second letter—it came just in time, as I leave to-morrow. In your next, address to George Borrow, Post Office, Tobermory, Isle of Mull, Scotland. You had, however, better write without delay, as I don't know how long I may be there; and be sure only to write once. I am glad we have got such a desirable tenant for our Maltings, and should be happy to hear that the cottage was also let so well. However, let us be grateful for what has been accomplished. I hope you wrote to Cooke as I desired you, and likewise said something about how I had waited for Murray. . . . I met to-day a very fat gentleman from Caithness, at the very north of Scotland; he said he was descended from the Norse. I talked to him about them, and he was so pleased with my conversation that he gave me his card, and begged that I would visit him if I went there. As I could do no less, I showed him my card—I had but one—and he no sooner saw the name than he was in a rapture. I am rather glad that you have got the next door, as the locality is highly respectable. Tell Hen. that I copied the Runic stone on the Castle Hill, Edinburgh. It was brought from Denmark in the old time. The inscription is imperfect, but I can read enough of it to see that it was created by a man to his father and mother. I again write the . . . for your next: George Borrow, Esq., Post Office, Tobermory, Isle of Mull, Scotland. God bless you and Hen. Ever yours,  
GEORGE BORROW.

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TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, 39 CAMPERDOWN TERRACE,  
GT. YARMOUTH

FORT AUGUSTUS, *Monday, October 7th, 1858.*

DEAR CARRETA,—I write a line lest you should be uneasy. Before leaving the Highlands I thought I would see a little more about me. So last week I set on a four days' task, a walk of a hundred miles. I returned here late last Thursday night. I walked that day forty-five miles; during the first twenty the rain poured in torrents and the wind blew in my face. The last seventeen miles were in the dark. To-morrow I proceed towards Mull. I hope that you got my letters, and that I shall find something from you awaiting me at the post office. The first day I passed over Corryarrick, a mountain 3000 feet high. I was nearly up to my middle in snow. As soon as I had passed it I was in Badenoch. The road on the farther side was horrible, and I was obliged to wade several rivulets, one of which was very boisterous and nearly threw me down. I wandered through a wonderful country, and picked up a great many strange legends from the people I met, but they were very few, the country being almost a desert, chiefly inhabited by deer. When amidst the lower mountains I frequently heard them blaring in the woods above me. The people at the inn here are by far the nicest I have met; they are kind and honourable to a degree. God bless you and Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, 39 CAMPERDOWN TERRACE,  
YARMOUTH

(Fragment? undated.)

On Tuesday I am going through the whole of it to Icolmkill—I should start to-morrow—but I must get my shoes new soles, for they have been torn to pieces by the roads, and likewise ~~some~~ of my things mended, for they are in a sad condition.

I shall return from Thurso to Inverness, as I shall want some more money to bring me home. So pray do not let the credit be withdrawn. What a blessing it is to have money, but how cautious people ought to be not to waste it. Pray remember me most kindly to our good friend Mr. Hills. Send the Harveys the pheasant as usual with my kind regards. I think you should write to Mr. Dalton of Bury telling him that I have been unwell, and that I send my kind regards and respects to him. I send dear Hen a paper in company with this, in which I have enclosed specimens of the heather, the moss and the fern, or "raineach," of Mull.—God bless you both.

GEORGE BORROW.

Do not delay in sending the order.  
Write at the same time telling me  
how you are.

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TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, 39 CAMPERDOWN TERRACE,  
YARMOUTH, NORFOLK

INVERNESS, Nov. 7th, 1858.

DEAR CARRETA,—After I wrote to you I walked round Mull and through it, over Benmore. I likewise went to Icolmkill, and passed twenty-four hours there. I saw the wonderful ruin and crossed the island. I suffered a great deal from hunger, but what I saw amply repaid me; on my return to Tobermory I was rather unwell, but got better. I was disappointed in a passage to Thurso by sea, so I was obliged to return to this place by train. On Tuesday, D.V., I shall set out on foot, and hope to find your letter awaiting me at the post office at Thurso. On coming hither by train I nearly lost my things. I was told at Huntly that the train stopped ten minutes, and meanwhile the train drove off *purposely*; I telegraphed to Keith in order that my things might be secured, describing where they were, under the seat. The reply was that there was nothing of the kind there. I instantly said that I would bring an action against the company, and walked off to the town, where I stated the facts to a magistrate, and gave him my name and address. He advised me to bring my action. I went back and found the people frightened. They telegraphed again—and the reply was that the things were safe. There is nothing like setting oneself up sometimes. I was terribly afraid I should never again find my books and things. I, however, got them, and my old umbrella, too. I was sent on by the mail train, but lost four hours, besides undergoing a great deal of misery and excitement. When I have been to Thurso and Kirkwall I shall return as quick as possible, and shall be glad to get out of the country. As I am here, however, I wish to see all I can, for I never wish to return. Whilst in Mull I lived very cheaply—it is not costing me more than seven shillings a day. The generality of the inns, however, in the lowlands are incredibly dear—half-a-crown for breakfast, consisting of a little tea, a couple of small eggs, and bread and butter—*two* shillings for attendance. Tell Her, that I have some moss for her from Benmore—also some seaweed from the farther shore of Icolmkill. God bless you. GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, YARMOUTH, NORFOLK

THURSO, 21st Nov. 1858.

MY DEAR CARRETA,—I reached this place on Friday night, and was glad enough to get your kind letter. I shall be so glad to get home to you. Since my last letter to you I have walked nearly 160 miles. I was terribly taken in with respect to distances—however, I managed to make my way. I have been to Johnny Groat's House, which is about twenty-two miles from this place. I had tolerably fine weather all the way, but

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within two or three miles of that place a terrible storm arose; the next day the country was covered with ice and snow. There is at present here a kind of Greenland winter, colder almost than I ever knew the winter in Russia. The streets are so covered with ice that it is dangerous to step out; to-morrow D. and I pass over into Orkney, and we shall take the first steamer to Aberdeen and Inverness, from whence I shall make the best of my way to England. It is well that I have no farther to walk, for walking now is almost impossible—the last twenty miles were terrible, and the weather is worse now than it was then. I was terribly deceived with respect to steamboats. I was told that one passed over to Orkney every day, and I have now been waiting two days, and there is not yet one. I have had quite enough of Scotland. When I was at Johnny Groat's I got a shell for dear Hen, which I hope I shall be able to bring or send to her. I am glad to hear that you have got out the money on the mortgage so satisfactorily. One of the greatest blessings in this world is to be independent. My spirits of late have been rather bad, owing principally to my dear mother's death. I always knew that we should miss her. I dreamt about her at Fort Augustus. Though I have walked so much I have suffered very little from fatigue, and have got over the ground with surprising facility, but I have not enjoyed the country so much as Wales. I wish that you would order a hat for me against I come home; the one I am wearing is very shabby, having been so frequently drenched with rain and storm-beaten. I cannot say the exact day that I shall be home but you may be expecting me. The worst is that there is no depending on the steamers, for there is scarcely any traffic in Scotland in winter. My appetite of late has been very poorly, chiefly, I believe, owing to badness of food and want of regular meals. Glad enough, I repeat, shall I be to get home to you and Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, YARMOUTH, NORFOLK

KIRKWALL, ORKNEY, *November 27th, 1858. Saturday.*

DEAR CARRETA,—I am, as you see, in Orkney, and I expect every minute the steamer which will take me to Shetland and Aberdeen, from which last place I go by train to Inverness, where my things are, and thence home. I had a stormy passage to Stromness, from whence I took a boat to the Isle of Hoy, where I saw the wonderful Dwarf's House hollowed out of the stone. From Stromness I walked here. I have seen the old Norwegian Cathedral; it is of red sandstone, and looks as if cut out of rock. It is different from almost everything of the kind I ever saw. It is stern and grand to a degree. I have also seen the ruins of the old Norwegian Bishop's palace in which King Hacon died; also the ruins of the palace of Patrick, Earl of Orkney. I have been treated here with every kindness

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and civility. As soon as the people knew who I was they could scarcely make enough of me. The Sheriff, Mr. Robertson, a great Gaelic scholar, said he was proud to see me in his house; and a young gentleman of the name of Petrie, Clerk of Supply, has done nothing but go about with me to show me the wonders of the place. Mr. Robertson wished to give me letters to some gentleman at Edinburgh. I, however, begged leave to be excused, saying that I wished to get home, as, indeed, I do, for my mind is wearied by seeing so many strange places. On my way to Kirkwall I saw the stones of Stennis—immense blocks of stone standing up like those of Salisbury Plain. All the country is full of Druidical and Pictish remains. It is, however, very barren, and scarcely a tree is to be seen, only a few dwarf ones. Orkney consists of a multitude of small islands, the principal of which is Pomona, in which Kirkwall is. The currents between them are terrible. I hope to be home a few days after you receive these lines, either by rail or steamer. This is a fine day, but there has been dreadful weather here. I hope we shall have a prosperous passage. I have purchased a little Kirkwall newspaper, which I send you with this letter. I shall perhaps post both at Lerwick or Aberdeen. I sent you a Johnny Groat's newspaper, which I hope you got. Don't tear either up, for they are curious. God bless you and Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW, YARMOUTH, NORFOLK

STIRLING, Dec. 14th, 1858.

DEAR CARRETA,—I write a line to tell you that I am well and that I am on my way to England, but I am stopped here for a day, for there is no conveyance. Wherever I can walk I get on very well—but if you depend on coaches or any means of conveyance in this country you are sure to be disappointed. This place is but thirty-five miles from Edinburgh, yet I am detained for a day—there is no train. The waste of that day will prevent me getting to Yarmouth from Hull by the steamer. Were it not for my baggage I would walk to Edinburgh. I got to Aberdeen, where I posted a letter for you. I was then obliged to return to Inverness for my luggage—125 miles. Rather than return again to Aberdeen, I sent on my things to Dunkeld and walked the 102 miles through the Highlands. When I got here I walked to Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine, thirty-eight miles over horrible roads. I then got back here. I have now seen the whole of Scotland that is worth seeing, and walked 600 miles. I shall be glad to be out of the country; a person here must depend entirely upon himself and his own legs. I have not spent much money—my expenses during my wanderings averaged a shilling a day. As I was walking through Strathspey, singularly enough I met two or three of the Phillips. I did not know them, but a child came running after me to ask

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use my name. It was Miss P. and two of the children. I hope to get to you in two or three days after you get this. God bless you and dear Hen.  
GEORGE BORROW.

In spite of Borrow's vow never to visit Scotland again, he was there eight years later—in 1866—but only in the Lowlands. His stepdaughter, Hen., or Henrietta Clarke, had married Dr. MacOubrey, of Belfast, and Borrow and his wife went on a visit to the pair. But the incorrigible vagabond in Borrow was forced to declare itself, and leaving his wife and daughter in Belfast he crossed to Stranraer by steamer on 17th July, 1866, and tramped through the lowlands, visiting Ecclefechan and Gretna Green. We have no record of his experiences at these places. The only literary impression of the Scots tour of 1866, apart from a brief reference in Dr. Knapp's *Life*, is an essay on Kirk Yetholm in *Romano Lavo-Lil*. We would gladly have exchanged it for an account of his visits to Abbotsford and Melrose, two places which he saw in August of this year.

In his letter of 27th November from Kirkwall it will be seen that Borrow records the kindness received from "a young gentleman of the name of Petrie." It is pleasant to find that when he returned to England he did not forget that kindness, as the next letter demonstrates:

TO GEORGE PETRIE, ESQ., KIRK WALL

39 CAMPERDOWN PLACE, YARMOUTH, *Jany. 14. 1859.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Some weeks ago I wrote to Mr. Murray [and] requested him to transmit to you two works of mine. Should you not have received them by the time this note reaches you, pray inform me and I will write to him again. They may have come already, but whenever they may come to hand, keep them in remembrance of one who will never forget your kind attention to him in Orkney.

On reaching Aberdeen I went to Inverness by rail. From there I sent off my luggage to Dunkeld, and walked thither by the Highland road. I never enjoyed a walk more—the weather was tolerably fine, and I was amidst some of the finest scenery in the world. I was particularly struck with that of Glen Truim. Near the top of the valley in sight of the Craig of Badenoch on the left hand side of the way, I saw an immense cairn, probably the memorial of some bloody clan battle. On my journey I picked up from the mouth of an old Highland woman a most remarkable tale concerning the death of Fian or Fingal.

## In Scotland and Ireland

It differs entirely from the Irish legends which I have heard on the subject—and is of a truly mythic character. Since visiting Shetland I have thought a great deal about the Picts, but cannot come to any satisfactory conclusion. Were they Celts? were they Laps? Macbeth could hardly have been a Lap, but then the tradition of the country that they were a diminutive race, and their name was Pight or Pict, which I almost think is the same as petit—pixolo—puj—pigmy. It is a truly perplexing subject—quite as much so as that of Fingal, and whether he was a Scotsman or an Irishman I have never been able to decide, as there has been so much to be said on both sides of the question. Please present my kind remembrances to Mrs. Petrie and all friends, particularly Mr. Sheriff Robertson, who first did me the favour of making me acquainted with you.—And believe me to remain, dear Sir, ever sincerely yours,

GEORGE BORROW.

Thank you for the newspaper—the notice was very kind, but rather too flattering.

On the same day that Borrow wrote, Mr. Petrie sent his acknowledgment of the books, and so the letters crossed:

I was very agreeably surprised on opening a packet, which came to me per steamer ten days ago, to find that it contained a present from you of your highly interesting and valuable works *Lavengro* and *Romany Rye*. Coming from any person such books would have been highly prized by me, and it is therefore specially gratifying to have them presented to me by their author. Please to accept of my sincere and heartfelt thanks for your kind remembrance of me and your valuable gift. May I request you to confer an additional favour on me by sending me a slip of paper to be pasted on each of the five volumes, stating that they were presented to me by you. I would like to hand them down as an heirloom to my family. I am afraid you will think that I am a very troublesome acquaintance.

I would have written sooner, but I expected to have had some information to give you about some of the existing superstitions of Orkney which might perhaps have some interest for you. I have, however, been much engrossed with county business during the last fortnight, and must therefore reserve my account of these matters till another opportunity.

Mr. Balfour, our principal landowner in Orkney, is just now writing an article on the ancient laws and customs of the county to be prefixed to a miscellaneous collection of documents, chiefly of the sixteenth century. He is taking the opportunity to give an account of the nature of the tenures by which the ancient Jarls held the Jarldom, and the manner in which the odalret became gradually supplanted. I have furnished him with

# The Life of George Borrow

several of the documents, and am just now going over it with him. It is for the Bannatyne Club in Edinburgh that he is preparing it, but I have suggested to him to have it printed for general sale, as it is very interesting, and contains a great mass of curious information condensed into a comparatively small space. Mr. Balfour is very sorry that he had not the pleasure of meeting you when you were here.

My last glimpse of George Borrow in Scotland during his memorable trip of the winter of 1858 is contained in a letter that I received some time ago from the Rev. J. Wilcock of St. Ringan's Manse, Lerwick, which runs as follows:

Nov. 18th, 1903.

DEAR SIR,—As I see that you are interested in George Borrow, would you allow me to supply you with a little notice of him which has not appeared in print? A friend here—need I explain that this is written from the capital of the Shetlands?—a friend, I say, now dead, told me that one day early in the forenoon, during the winter, he had walked out from the town for a stroll into the country. About a mile out from the town is a piece of water called the Loch of Clickimin, on a peninsula, in which is an ancient (so-called) "Pictish Castle." His attention was attracted by a tall, burly stranger, who was surveying this ancient relic with deep interest. As the water of the loch was well up about the castle, converting the plot of ground on which it stood almost altogether into an island, the stranger took off shoes and stockings and trousers, and waded all round the building in order to get a thorough view of it. This procedure was all the more remarkable from the fact, as above mentioned, that the season was winter. I believe that there was snow on the ground at the time. My friend noticed on meeting him again in the course of the same walk that he was very lightly clothed. He had on a cotton shirt, a loose open jacket, and on the whole was evidently indifferent to the rigour of our northern climate at that time of the year.

In addition to the visit to Belfast in 1866, Borrow was in Ireland the year following his Scots tour of 1858, that is to say from July to November, 1859. He went, accompanied by his wife and daughter, by Holyhead to Dublin, where, as Dr. Knapp has discovered, they resided at 75 St. Stephen's Green, South. Borrow, as was his custom, left his family while he was on a walking tour which included Connemara and on northward to the Giant's Causeway. He was keenly interested in the two Societies in Dublin engaged upon the study of ancient Irish literature, and he became

## In Scotland and Ireland

a member of the Ossianic Society in July of this year. I have a number of Borrow's translations from the Irish in my possession, but no notebooks of his tour on this occasion.

All Irishmen who wish their country to preserve its individuality should have a kindly feeling for George Borrow. Opposed as he was to the majority of the people in religion and in politics, he was about the only Englishman of his time who took an interest in their national literature, language and folk-lore. Had he written such another travel book about Ireland as he wrote about Wales he would certainly have added to the sum of human pleasure.

I find only one letter to his wife during this Irish journey:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

BALLINA, COUNTY MAYO, *Thursday Morning.*

MY DEAR CARRETA,—I write to you a few lines. I have now walked 270 miles, and have passed through Leinster and Connaught. I have suffered a good deal of hardship, for this is a very different country to walk in from England. The food is bad and does not agree with me. I shall be glad to get back, but first of all I wish to walk to the Causeway. As soon as I have done that I shall get on railroad and return, as I find there is a railroad from Londonderry to Dublin. Pray direct to me at Post Office, Londonderry. I have at present about seven pounds remaining, perhaps it would bring me back to Dublin; however, to prevent accidents, have the kindness to enclose me an order on the Post Office, Londonderry, for five pounds. I expect to be there next Monday, and to be home by the end of the week. Glad enough I shall be to get back to you and Hen. I got your letter at Galway. What you said about poor Flora was comforting—pray take care of her. Don't forget the order. I hope to write in a day or two a kind of duplicate of this. I send Hen. heath from Connemara, and also seaweed from a bay of the Atlantic. I have walked across Ireland; the country people are civil; but I believe all classes are disposed to join the French. The idolatry and popery are beyond conception. God bless you, dearest.

GEORGE BORROW.

Love to Hen. and poor Flora. (Keep this.)

## CHAPTER XXIX

### "THE ROMANY RYE"

GEORGE BORROW'S three most important books had all a very interesting history. We have seen the processes by which *The Bible in Spain* was built up from note-books and letters. We have seen further the most curious apprenticeship by which *Lavengro* came into existence. The most distinctly English book—at least in a certain absence of cosmopolitanism—that Victorian literature produced was to a great extent written on scraps of paper during a prolonged Continental tour which included Constantinople and Budapest. In *Lavengro* we have only half a book, the whole work, which included what came to be published as *The Romany Rye*, having been intended to appear in four volumes. The first volume was written in 1843, the second in 1845, after the Continental tour, which is made use of in the description of the Hungarian, and the third volume in the years between 1845 and 1848. Then in 1852 Borrow wrote out an "advertisement" of a fourth volume, which runs as follows:

Shortly will be published in one volume. Price 10s. *The Romany Rye*, Being the fourth volume of *Lavengro*. By George Borrow, author of *The Bible in Spain*.

But this volume did not make an appearance "shortly." Its author was far too much offended with the critics, too disheartened it may be to care to offer himself again for their gibes. The years rolled on, much of the time being spent at Yarmouth, a little of it at Oulton. There was a visit to Cornwall in 1854, and another to Wales in the same year. The Isle of Man was selected for a holiday in 1855, and not until 1857 did *The Romany Rye* appear. The book was now in two volumes, and we see that the word Romany had dropped an "m":

## "The Romany Rye"

*The Romany Rye: A Sequel to "Lavengro."* By George Borrow, author of "The Bible in Spain," "The Gypsies of Spain," etc., "Fear God, and take your own part." In Two Volumes. London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1857.

We are introduced once more to many old favourites, to Petulengro, to the Man in Black, and above all to Isopel Berners. The incidents of *Lavengro* are supposed to have taken place between the 24th May, 1825, and the 18th July of that year. In *The Romany Rye* the incidents apparently occur between 19th July and 3rd August, 1825. In the opinion of that most eminent of gypsy experts, Mr. John Sampson, the whole of the episodes in the five volumes occurred in seventy-two days. Mr. Sampson agrees with Dr. Knapp in locating Mumper's Dingle in Momber or Monmer Lane, Willenhall, Shropshire. The dingle has disappeared—it is now occupied by the Monmer Lane Ironworks—but you may still find Dingle Bridge and Dingle Lane. The book has added to the glamour of gipsydom, and to the interest in the gypsies which we all derive from *Lavengro*, but Mr. Sampson makes short work of Borrow's gypsy learning on its philological side. "No gypsy," he says, "ever uses *chal* or *engro* as a separate word, or talks of the *dukking* dook or of *penning a dukkerin*." "Borrow's genders are perversely incorrect"; and "Romany"—a word which can never get out of our language, let philologists say what they will—should have been "Romani." "'Haarsträubend' is the fitting epithet," says Mr. Sampson, "which an Oriental scholar, Professor Richard Pischel of Berlin, finds to describe Borrow's etymologies." But all this is very unimportant, and the book remains in the whole of its forty-seven chapters not one whit less a joy to us than does its predecessor *Lavengro*, with its visions of gypsies and highwaymen and boxers.

But then there is its "Appendix." That appendix of eleven petulant chapters undoubtedly did Borrow harm in his day and generation. Now his fame is too great, and his genius too firmly established for these strange dissertations on men and things to offer anything but amusement or edification. They reveal, for example, the singularly non-literary character of this great man of letters. Much—too much—has been made of his dislike of Walter Scott and his writings. As a matter of fact Borrow tells us that he

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admired Scott both as a prose writer and as a poet. "Since Scott he had read no modern writer. Scott was greater than Homer," he told Frances Cobbe. But he takes occasion to condemn his "Charlie o'er the water nonsense," and declares that his love of and sympathy with certain periods and incidents have made for sympathy with what he always calls "Popery." Well, looking at the matter from an entirely opposite point of view, Cardinal Newman declared that the writings of Scott had had no inconsiderable influence in directing his mind towards the Church of Rome.

During the first quarter of this century a great poet was raised up in the North, who, whatever were his defects, has contributed by his works, in prose and verse, to prepare men for some closer and more practical approximation to Catholic truth. The general need of something deeper and more attractive than what had offered itself elsewhere may be considered to have led to his popularity; and by means of his popularity he re-acted on his readers, stimulating their mental thirst, feeding their hopes, setting before them visions, which, when once seen, are not easily forgotten, and silently indoctrinating them with nobler ideas, which might afterwards be appealed to as first principles.

And thus we see that Borrow had a certain prescience in this matter. But Borrow, in good truth, cared little for modern English literature. His heart was entirely with the poets of other lands—the Scandinavians and the Kelts. In Virgil he apparently took little interest, nor in the great poetry of Greece, Rome and England, although we find a reference to Theocritus and Dante in his books. Fortunately for his fame he had read *Gil Blas*, *Don Quixote*, and, above all, *Robinson Crusoe*, which last book, first read as a boy of six, coloured his whole life. Defoe and Fielding and Bunyan were the English authors to whom he owed most. Of Byron he has quaint things to say, and of Wordsworth things that are neither quaint nor wise. We recall the man in the field in the twenty-second chapter of *The Roman Rye* who used Wordsworth's poetry as a soporific. And throughout his life Borrow's position towards his contemporaries in literature was ever contemptuous. He makes no mention of Carlyle or Ruskin or Matthew Arnold, and they in their turn, it may be added, make no mention of him or of his works. Thackeray he snubbed on one of the

## "The Romany Rye"

few occasions they met, and Browning and Tennyson were alike unrevealed to him. Borrow indeed stands quite apart from the great literature of a period in which he was a striking and individual figure. Lacking appreciation in this sphere of work, he wrote of "the contemptible trade of author," counting it less creditable than that of a jockey.

But all this is a digression from the progress of our narrative of the advent of *The Romany Rye*. The book was published in an edition of 1000 copies in April, 1857, and it took thirty years to dispose of 3750 copies. Not more than 2000 copies of his book were sold in Great Britain during the twenty-three remaining years of Borrow's life. What wonder that he was embittered by his failure! The reviews were far from favourable, although Mr. Elwin wrote not unkindly in an article in the *Quarterly Review* called "Roving Life in England." No critic, however, was as severe as *The Athenæum*, which had called *Lavengro* "balderdash" and referred to *The Romany Rye* as the "literary dough" of an author "whose dullest gypsy preparation we have now read." In later years, when, alas! it was too late, *The Athenæum*, through the eloquent pen of Theodore Watts, made good amends. But William Bodham Donne wrote to Borrow with adequate enthusiasm:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

12 ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, May 24th, 1857.

MY DEAR SIR,—I received your book some days ago, but would not write to you before I was able to read it, at least once, since it is needless, I hope, for me to assure you that I am truly gratified by the gift.

Time to read it I could not find for some days after it was sent hither, for what with winding up my affairs here, the election of my successor, preparations for flitting, etc., etc., I have been incessantly occupied with matters needful to be done, but far less agreeable to do than reading *The Romany Rye*. All I have said of *Lavengro* to yourself personally, or to others publicly or privately, I say again of *The Romany Rye*. Everywhere in it the hand of the master is stamped boldly and deeply. You join the chisel of Dante with the pencil of Defoe.

I am rejoiced to see so many works announced of yours, for you have more that is worth knowing to tell than any one I am acquainted with. For your coming progeny's sake I am disposed to wish you had worried the literary-craft less. Brand and score them never so much, they will not turn and repent,

## The Life of George Borrow

but only spit the more froth and venom. I am reckoning on my emancipation with an eagerness hardly proper at my years, but I cannot help it, so thoroughly do I hate London, and so much do I love the country. I have taken a house, or rather a cottage, at Walton on Thames, just on the skirts of Weybridge, and there I hope to see you before I come into Norfolk, for I am afraid my face will not be turned eastward for many weeks if not months.

Remember me kindly to Mrs. Borrow and Miss Clarke, and believe me, my dear Sir, very truly and thankfully yours,

WM. B. DONNE.

And perhaps a letter from the then Town Clerk of Oxford is worth reproducing here:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE, OXFORD, 19th August 1857.

SIR,—We have, attached to our Corporation, an ancient jocular court composed of 13 of the poor old freemen who attend the elections and have a king who sits attired in scarlet with a crown and sentences interlopers (non-freemen) to be cold-burned, *i.e.* a bucket or so of water introduced to the offender's sleeve by means of the city pump; but this infliction is of course generally commuted by a small pecuniary compensation.

They call themselves "Slaveonians" or "Sclavonians." The only notice we have of them in the city records is by the name of "Slovens Hall." Reading *Romany Rye* I notice your account of the Slaves and venture to trouble you with this, and to enquire whether you think that the Slaves might be connected through the Saxons with the ancient municipal institutions of this country. You are no doubt aware that Oxford is one of the most ancient Saxon towns, being a royal bailiwick and fortified before the Conquest,—Yours truly,

GEORGE P. HESTER.

In spite of contemporary criticism, *The Romany Rye* is a great book, or rather it contains the concluding chapters of a great book. Sequels are usually proclaimed to be inferior to their predecessors. But *The Roman; Rye* is not a sequel. It is part of *Lavengro*, and is therefore Borrow's most imperishable monument.

## CHAPTER XXX

EDWARD FITZGERALD

EDWARD FITZGERALD once declared that he was about the only friend with whom Borrow had never quarrelled. There was probably no reason for this exceptional amity other than the "genius for friendship" with which FitzGerald has been rightly credited. There were certainly, however, many points of likeness between the two men which might have kept them at peace. Both had written copiously and out of all proportion to the public demand for their work. Both revelled in translation. FitzGerald's eight volumes in a magnificent American edition consist mainly of translations from various tongues which no man presumably now reads. All the world has read and will long continue to read his translation or paraphrase of Omar Khayyám's *Rubáiyát*. "Old Fitz," as his friends called him, lives by that, although his letters are among the best in literature. Borrow wrote four books that will live, but had publishers been amenable he would have published forty, and all as unsaleable as the major part of FitzGerald's translations. Both men were Suffolk squires, and yet delighted more in the company of a class other than their own, FitzGerald of boatmen, Borrow of gypsies; both were counted eccentrics in their respective villages. Perhaps alone among the great Victorian authors they lived to be old without receiving in their lives any popular recognition of their great literary achievements, if we except the momentary recognition of *The Bible in Spain*. But FitzGerald had a more cultivated mind than Borrow. He loved literature and literary men whilst Borrow did not. His criticism of books is of the best, and his friendships with bookmen are among the most interesting in literary history. "A solitary, shy, kind-hearted man," was the verdict upon him of the frequently censorious Carlyle. When Anne Thackeray asked her father which of his friends he had loved

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best, he answered "Dear old Fitz, to be sure," and Tennyson would have said the same. Borrow had none of these gifts as a letter-writer and no genius for friendship. The charm of his style, so indisputable in his best work, is absent from his letters; and his friends were alienated one after another. Borrow's undisciplined intellect and narrow upbringing were a curse to him, from the point of view of his own personal happiness, although they helped him to achieve exactly the work for which he was best fitted. Borrow's acquaintance with FitzGerald was commenced by the latter, who, in July, 1853, sent from Boulge Hall, Suffolk, to Oulton Hall, in the same county, his recently published volume *Six Dramas of Calderon*. He apologises for making so free with "a great man; but, as usual, I shall feel least fear before a man like yourself who both do fine things in your own language and are deep read in those of others." He also refers to "our common friend Donne," so that it is probable that they had met at Donne's house. The next letter, also published by Dr. Knapp, that FitzGerald writes to Borrow is dated from his home in Great Portland Street in 1856. He presents his friend with a Turkish Dictionary, and announces his coming marriage to Miss Barton, "Our united ages amount to 96!—a dangerous experiment on both sides"—as it proved. The first reference to Borrow in the FitzGerald *Letters* issued by his authorised publishers is addressed to Professor Cowell in January, 1857:

I was with Borrow a week ago at Donne's, and also at Yarmouth three months ago: he is well, but not yet agreed with Murray. He read me a long translation he had made from the Turkish: which I could not admire, and his taste becomes stranger than ever.

But Borrow's genius if not his taste was always admired by FitzGerald, as the following letter among my Borrow Papers clearly indicates. Borrow had published *The Romany Rye* at the beginning of May:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ., OULTON HALL

GOLDINGTON HALL, BEDFORD, May 24/57.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your Book was put into my hands a week ago just as I was leaving London; so I e'en carried it down

## Edward FitzGerald

here, and have been reading it under the best Circumstances:—at such a Season—in the Fields as they now are—and in company with a Friend I love best in the world—who scarce ever reads a Book, but knows better than I do what they are made of from a hint.

Well, lying in a Paddock of his, I have been travelling along with you to Horncastle, etc.,—in a very delightful way for the most part; something as I have travelled, and love to travel, with Fielding, Cervantes, and Robinson Crusoe—and a smack of all these there seems to me, with something beside, in your book. But, as will happen in Travel, there were some spots I didn't like so well—didn't like *at all*: and sometimes wished to myself that I, a poor "Man of Taste," had been at your Elbow (who are a Man of much more than Taste) to divert you, or get you by some means to pass lightlier over some places. But you wouldn't have heeded me, and won't heed me, and *must* go your own way, I think—And in the parts I least like, I am yet thankful for honest, daring, and original Thought and Speech such as one hardly gets in these mealy-mouthed days. It was very kind of you to send me your book.

My Wife is already established at a House called "Albert's Villa," or some such name, at Gorleston—but a short walk from you: and I am to find myself there in a few days. So I shall perhaps tell you more of my thoughts ere long. Now I shall finish this large Sheet with a Tetrastich of one Omar Khayyam who was an Epicurean Infidel some 500 years ago:

چون عهده نمی کند کسی فردارا  
حالی خوش کن تو این دل شیدارا  
می نوش بنور ماه ای ماه که ماه  
بسیار بجوید و نیابد مارا

and am yours very truly,

EDWARD FITZGERALD.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Edward Heron-Allen for the information that this is the original of the last verse but one in FitzGerald's first version of the *Rubāiyāt*:

۱۷۴. Ah Moon of my Delight, who knowest no wane,  
The Moon of Heaven is rising once again,  
How oft, hereafter rising, shall she look  
Through this same Garden after me—in vain.

## The Life of George Borrow

In a letter to Cowell about the same time—June 5, 1857—FitzGerald writes that he is about to set out for Gorleston, Great Yarmouth:

Within hail almost lives George Borrow, who has lately published, and given me, two new volumes of *Lavengro* called *Romany Rye*, with some excellent things, and some very bad (as I have made bold to write to him—how shall I face him!) You would not like the book at all I think.

It was Cowell, it will be remembered, who introduced FitzGerald to the Persian poet Omar, and afterwards regretted the act. The first edition of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* appeared two years later, in 1859. Edward Byles Cowell was born in Ipswich in 1826, and he was educated at the Ipswich Grammar School. It was in the library attached to the Ipswich Library Institution that Cowell commenced the study of Oriental languages. In 1842 he entered the business of his father and grandfather as a merchant and maltster. When only twenty years of age he commenced his friendship with Edward FitzGerald, and their correspondence may be found in Dr. Aldis Wright's *FitzGerald Correspondence*. In 1850 he left his brother to carry on the business and entered himself at Magdalen Hall, Oxford, where he passed six years. At intervals he read Greek with FitzGerald and, later, Persian. FitzGerald commenced to learn this last language, which was to bring him fame, when he was forty-four years of age. In 1856 Cowell was appointed to a Professorship of English History at Calcutta, and from there he sent FitzGerald a copy of the manuscript of *Omar Khayyám*, afterwards lent by FitzGerald to Borrow. Much earlier than this—in 1853—FitzGerald had written to Borrow:

At Ipswich, indeed, is a man whom you would like to know. I think, and who would like to know you; one Edward Cowell: a great scholar, if I may judge. . . . Should you go to Ipswich do look for him! a great deal more worth looking for (I speak with no sham modesty, I am sure) than yours,—E. F. G.

Twenty-six years afterwards—in 1879—we find FitzGerald writing to Dr. Aldis Wright to the effect that Cowell had been seized with "a wish to learn Welsh under George Borrow":

And as he would not venture otherwise, I gave him a Note of Introduction, and off he went, and had an hour with the

## Edward FitzGerald

old Boy, who was hard of hearing and shut up in a stuffy room, but cordial enough; and Cowell was glad to have seen the Man, and tell him that it was his *Wild Wales* which first inspired a thirst for this language into the Professor.

There is one short letter from FitzGerald to Borrow in Dr. Aldin Wright's *FitzGerald Letters*. It is dated June, 1857, and from it we learn that FitzGerald lent Borrow the Calcutta manuscript of *Omar Khayyám*, upon which he based his own immortal translation, and from a letter to W. H. Thompson in 1861 we learn that Cowell, who had inspired the writing of FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyám*, Donne and Borrow were the only three friends to whom he had sent copies of his "peccadilloes in verse" as he calls his remarkable translation, and this two years after it was published. A letter, dated July 6, 1857, asks for the return of FitzGerald's copy of the Ouseley manuscript of *Omar Khayyám*, Borrow having clearly already returned the Calcutta manuscript. This letter concludes on a pathetic note:

My old Parson Crabbe is bowing down under epileptic fits, or something like, and I believe his brave old white head will soon sink into the village church sward. Why, *our* time seems coming. Make way, gentlemen!

Borrow comes more than once into the story of FitzGerald's great translation of *Omar Khayyám*, which in our day has caused so great a sensation, and deserves all the enthusiasm that it has excited as the

" . . . golden Eastern lay,  
Than which I know no version done  
In English more divinely well,"

to quote Tennyson's famous eulogy. Cowell, to his after regret, for he had none of FitzGerald's *dolce far niente* paganism, had sent FitzGerald from Calcutta, where he was, the manuscript of Omar Khayyám's *Rubáiyát* in Persian, and FitzGerald was captured by it. Two years later, as we know, he produced the translation, which was so much more than a translation. "Omar breathes a sort of consolation to me," he wrote to Cowell. "Borrow is greatly delighted with your MS. of Omar which I showed

# The Life of George Borrow

him," he says in another letter to Cowell (23rd June, 1857), "delighted at the terseness so unusual in Oriental verse."

The next two letters by FitzGerald from my Borrow Papers are of the year 1859, the year of the first publication of the *Rubdiyd*:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

10 MARINE PARADE, LOWESTOFT.

MY DEAR BORROW,—I have come here with three nieces to give them sea air and change. They are all perfectly quiet, sensible, and unpretentious girls; so as, if you will come over here any day or days, we will find you board and bed too, for a week longer at any rate. There is a good room below, which we now only use for meals, but which you and I can be quite at our sole ease in. Won't you come?

I purpose (and indeed have been some while intentioning) to go over to Yarmouth to look for you. But I write this note in hope it may bring you hither also.

Donne has got his soldier boy home from India—Freddy—I always thought him a very nice fellow indeed. No doubt life is happy enough to all of them just now. Donne has been on a visit to the Highlands—which seems to have pleased him—I have got an MS. of Bahram and his Seven Castles (Persian), which I have not yet cared to look far into. Will you? It is short, fairly transcribed, and of some repute in its own country. I hear. Cowell sent it me from Calcutta; but it almost requires his company to make one devote one's time to Persian, when, with what remains of one's old English eyes, one can read the *Odyssey* and *Shakespeare*.

With compliments to the ladies, believe me, Yours very truly,  
EDWARD FITZGERALD.

I didn't know you were back from your usual summer tour till Mr. Cobb told my sister lately of having seen you.

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

BATH HOUSE, LOWESTOFT, October 10/59.

DEAR BORROW,—This time last year I was here and wrote to ask about you. You were gone to Scotland. Well, where are you now? As I also said last year: "If you be in Yarmouth and have any mind to see me I will go over some day; or here I am if you will come here. And I am quite alone. As it is I would bus it to Yarmouth but I don't know if you and yours be there at all, nor if there, whereabouts. If I don't hear at all I shall suppose you are not there, a one of your excursions, or not wanting to be rooted out; a condition I too well under-

## Edward FitzGerald

stand. I was at Gorleston some months ago for some while; just after losing my greatest friend, the Bedfordshire lad who was crushed to death, coming home from hunting, his horse falling on him. He survived indeed two months, and I had been to bid him eternal adieu, so had no appetite for anything but rest—rest—rest. I have just seen his widow off from here. With kind regards to the ladies, Yours very truly,

EDWARD FITZGERALD.

In a letter to George Crabbe the third, and the grandson of the poet, in 1862, FitzGerald tells him that he has just been reading Borrow's *Wild Wales*, "which I like well because I can hear him talking it. But I don't know if others will like it." "No one writes better English than Borrow in general," he says. But FitzGerald, as a lover of style, is vexed with some of Borrow's phrases, and instances one: "'The scenery was beautiful to a degree.' What degree? When did this vile phrase arise?" The criticism is just, but Borrow, in common with many other great English authors whose work will live, was not uniformly a good stylist. He has many lamentable fallings away from the ideals of the stylist. But he will, by virtue of a wonderful individuality, outlive many a good stylist. His four great books are immortal, and one of them is *Wild Wales*.

We have a glimpse of FitzGerald in the following letter in my possession, by the friend who had introduced him to Borrow, William Bodham Donne:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

40 WEYMOUTH STREET, PORTLAND PLACE, W.,  
November 28/63.

MY DEAR BORROW,—Many thanks for the copy of *Wild Wales* reserved for and sent to me by Mr. R. Cooke. Before this copy arrived I had obtained one from the London Library and read it through, not exactly *stans pede in uno*, but certainly almost at a stretch. I could not indeed lay it down, it interested me so much. It is one of the very best records of home travel, if indeed so strange a country as Wales is can properly be called home, I have ever met with.

Immediately on closing the third volume I secured a few pages in *Fraser's Magazine* for *Wild Wales*, for though you do not stand in need of my aid, yet my notice will not do you a mischief, and some of the reviewers of *Lavengro* were, I recollect, shocking blockheads, misinterpreting the letter and

## The Life of George Borrow

misconceiving the spirit of that work. I have, since we met in Burlington Arcade, been on a visit to FitzGerald. He is in better spirits by far than when I saw him about the same time in last year. He has his pictures and his chattels about him, and has picked up some acquaintance among the merchants and mariners of Woodbridge, who, although far below his level, are yet better company than the two old skippers he was consorting with in 1861. They—his present friends—came in of an evening, and sat and drank and talked, and I enjoyed their talk very much, since they discussed of what they understood, which is more than I can say generally of the fine folks I occasionally (very occasionally now) meet in London. I should have said more about your book, only I wish to keep it for print: and you don't need to be told by me that it is very good.—With best regards to Mrs. Borrow and Miss Clarke, I am, yours ever truly,  
W. B. DONNE.

The last letter from FitzGerald to Borrow is dated many years after the correspondence I have here printed. From it we gather that there had been no correspondence in the interval. FitzGerald writes from Little Grange, Woodbridge, in January, 1875, to say that he had received a message from Borrow that he would be glad to see him at Oulton. "I think the more of it," says FitzGerald, "because I imagine, from what I have heard, that you have slunk away from human company as much as I have." He hints that they might not like one another so well after a fifteen years' separation. He declares with infinite pathos that he has now severed himself from all old ties, has refused the invitations of old college friends and old school-fellows. To him there was no companionship possible for his declining days other than his reflections and verses. It is a fine letter, filled with that graciousness of spirit that was ever a trait in FitzGerald's noble nature. The two men never met again. Borrow died in 1881, FitzGerald two years later.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### "WILD WALES"

THE year 1854 was an adventurous one in Borrow's life, for he, so essentially a Celt, had in that year two interesting experiences of the "Celtic Fringe." He spent the first months of the year in Cornwall, as we have seen, and from July to November he was in Wales. That tour he recorded in pencilled note-books, four of which are in the Knapp Collection in New York, and are duly referred to in Dr. Knapp's biography, and two of which are in my possession. In addition to this I have the complete manuscript of *Wild Wales* in Borrow's handwriting, and many variants of it in countless, carefully written pages. Therein lie the possibilities of a singularly interesting edition of *Wild Wales* should opportunity offer for its publication. When I examine the manuscript, with its demonstration of careful preparation, I do not wonder that it took Borrow eight years—from 1854 to 1862—to prepare this book for the press. Assuredly we recognise here, as in all his books, that he realised Carlyle's definition of genius—"the transcendent capacity of taking trouble—first of all."

It was on 27th July, 1854, that Borrow, his wife and her daughter, Henrietta Clarke, set out on their journey to North Wales. Dr. Knapp prints two kindly letters from Mrs. Borrow to her mother-in-law written from Llangollen on this tour. "We are in a lovely quiet spot," she writes, "Dear George goes out exploring the mountains. . . . The poor here are humble, simple, and good." In the second letter Mrs. Borrow records that her husband "keeps a *daily* journal of all that goes on, so that he can make a most amusing book in a month." Yet Borrow took eight years to make it. The failure of *The Romany Rye*, which was due for publication before *Wild Wales*, accounts for this, and perhaps also the disappointment that another book, long since ready, did not find a publisher. In the

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letter from which I have quoted Mary Borrow tells Anne Borrow that her son will, she expects at Christmas, publish *The Romany Rye*, "together with his poetry in all the European languages. This last book had been on his hands for many a day, and indeed in *Wild Wales* he writes of "a mountain of unpublished translations" of which this book, duly advertised in *The Romany Rye*, was a part.

After an ascent of Snowdon arm in arm with Henrietta, Mrs. Borrow remaining behind, Borrow left his wife and daughter to find their way back to Yarmouth, and continued his journey, all of which is most picturesquely described in *Wild Wales*. Before that book was published, however, Borrow was to visit the Isle of Man, Scotland, and Ireland. He was to publish *The Romany Rye* (1857); to see his mother die (1858); and to issue his very limited edition of *The Sleeping Bard* (1860); and, lastly, to remove to Brompton (1860). It was at the end of the year 1862 that *Wild Wales* was published. It had been written during the two years immediately following the tour in Wales, in 1855 and 1856. It had been announced as ready for publication in 1857, but doubtless the chilly reception of *The Romany Rye* in that year, of which we have written, had made Borrow lukewarm as to venturing once more before the public. The public was again irresponsive. *The Cornhill Magazine*, then edited by Thackeray, declared the book to be "tiresome reading." The *Spectator* reviewer was more kindly, but nowhere was there any enthusiasm. Only a thousand copies were sold, and a second edition did not appear until 1865, and not another until seven years after Borrow's death. Yet the author had the encouragement that comes from kindly correspondents. Here, for example, is a letter that could not but have pleased him:

WEST HILL LODGE, HIGHGATE,  
Dec. 29th, 1862.

DEAR SIR,—We have had a great Christmas pleasure this year—the reading of your *Wild Wales*, which has taken us so deliciously into the lovely fresh scenery and life of that pleasant mountain-land. My husband and myself made a little walking tour over some of your ground in North Wales this year; my daughter and her uncle, Richard Howitt, did the same; and we have been ourselves collecting material for a work, the scenes of which will be laid amidst some of our and your favourite moun-

## “ Wild Wales ”

tains. But the object of my writing was not to tell you this; but after assuring you of the pleasure your work has given us—to say also that in one respect it has tantalised us. You have told over and over again to fascinated audiences, Lope de Vega's ghost story, but still leave the poor reader at the end of the book longing to hear it in vain.

May I ask you, therefore, to inform us in which of Lope de Vega's numerous works this same ghost story is to be found? We like ghost stories, and to a certain extent believe in them, we deserve therefore to know the best ghost story in the world.

Wishing for you, your wife and your Henrietta, all the compliments of the season in the best and truest sense of expression.—I am, dear sir, yours sincerely,

MARY HOWITT.

The reference to Lope de Vega's ghost story is due to the fact that in the fifty-fifth chapter of *Wild Wales*, Borrow, after declaring that Lope de Vega was “one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived,” added, that among his tales may be found “the best ghost story in the world.” Dr. Knapp found the story in Borrow's handwriting among the manuscripts that came to him, and gives it in full. In good truth it is but moderately interesting, although Borrow seems to have told it to many audiences when in Wales, but this perhaps provides the humour of the situation. It seems clear that Borrow contemplated publishing Lope de Vega's ghost story in a later book. We note here, indeed, a letter of a much later date in which Borrow refers to the possibility of a supplement to *Wild Wales*, the only suggestion of such a book that I have seen, although there is plenty of new manuscript in my Borrow collection to have made such a book possible had Borrow been encouraged by his publisher and the public to write it.

TO J. EVAN WILLIAMS, ESQ.

22 HEREFORD SQUARE, BROMPTON, Decr. 31, 1863.

DEAR SIR,—I have received your letter and thank you for the kind manner in which you are pleased to express yourself concerning me. Now for your questions. With respect to Lope De Vega's ghost story, I beg to say that I am thinking of publishing a supplement to my *Wild Wales* in which, amongst other things, I shall give a full account of the tale and point out where it is to be found. You cannot imagine the number of letters I receive on the subject of that ghost story. With regard to the Slavonian languages, I wish to observe that they are all well deserving of study. The Servian and Bohemian contain a great many old

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traditional songs, and the latter possesses a curious though not very extensive prose literature. The Polish has, I may say, been rendered immortal by the writings of Mickiewicz, whose 'Conrad Wallenrod' is probably the most remarkable poem of the present century. The Russian, however, is the most important of all the Slavonian tongues, not on account of its literature but because it is spoken by fifty millions of people, it being the dominant speech from the Gulf of Finland to the frontiers of China. There is a remarkable similarity both in sound and sense between many Russian and Welsh words, for example "tcheló" is the Russian for forehead, "tal" is Welsh for the same; "iasnŷy" (neuter "iasnoe") is the Russian for clear or radiant, "iesin" the Welsh, so that if it were grammatical in Russian to place the adjective after the noun as is the custom in Welsh, the Welsh compound "Taliesin" (Radiant forehead) might be rendered in Russian by "Tchelóiasnoe," which would be wondrously like the Welsh name; unfortunately, however, Russian grammar would compel any one wishing to Russianise "Talie-sin" to say not "Tchelóiasnoe" but "Iasnoetcheló."—Yours truly,

GEORGE BORROW.

Another letter that Borrow owed to his *Wild Wales* may well have place here. It will be recalled that in his fortieth chapter he waxes enthusiastic over Lewis Morris, the Welsh bard, who was born in Anglesey in 1700 and died in 1765. Morris's great-grandson, Sir Lewis Morris (1833-1907), the author of the once popular *Epic of Hades*, was twenty-nine years of age when he wrote to Borrow as follows:—

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

REFORM CLUB, Dec. 29, 1862.

SIR,—I have just finished reading your work on *Wild Wales*, and cannot refrain from writing to thank you for the very life-like picture of the Welsh people, North and South, which, unlike other Englishmen, you have managed to give us. To ordinary Englishmen the language is of course an insurmountable bar to any real knowledge of the people, and the result is that within six hours of Paddington or Euston Square is a country nibbled at superficially by droves of holiday-makers, but not really better known than Asia Minor. I wish it were possible to get rid of all obstacles which stand in the way of the development of the Welsh people and the Welsh intellect. In the meantime every book which like yours tends to lighten the thick darkness which seems to hang round Wales deserves the acknowledgments of every true Welshman. I am, perhaps, more especially called upon to express my thanks for the very high terms in which you speak of my great-grandfather, Lewis Morris. I believe you

## "Wild Wales"

have not said a word more than he deserves. Some of the facts which you mention with regard to him were unknown to me, and as I take a very great interest in everything relating to my ancestor I venture to ask you whether you can indicate any source of knowledge with regard to him and his wife, other than those which I have at present—viz., an old number of the *Cambrian Register* and some notices of him in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1760-70. There is also a letter of his in Lord Teignmouth's *Life of Sir William Jones* in which he claims kindred with that great scholar. Many of his manuscript poems and much correspondence are now in the library of the British Museum, most of them I regret to say a sealed book to one who like myself had yet to learn Welsh. But I am not the less anxious to learn all that can be ascertained about my great ancestor. I should say that two of his brothers, Richard and William, were eminent Welsh scholars.

With apologies for addressing you so unceremoniously, and with renewed thanks, I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

LEWIS MORRIS.

An interesting letter to Borrow from another once popular writer belongs to this period:

TO GEORGE BORROW, ESQ.

THE "PRESS" OFFICE, STRAND,  
WESTMINSTER, Thursday.

One who has read and delighted in everything Mr. Borrow has yet published ventures to say how great has been his delight in reading *Wild Wales*. No philologist or linguist, I am yet an untiring walker and versifier: and really I think that few things are pleasanter than to walk and to versify. Also, well do I love good ale, natural drink of the English. If I could envy anything, it is your linguistic faculty, which unlocks to you the hearts of the unknown races of these islands—unknown, I mean, as to their real feelings and habits, to ordinary Englishmen—and your still higher faculty of describing your adventures in the purest and raciest English of the day. I send you a Danish daily journal, which you may not have seen. Once a week it issues articles in English. How beautiful (but of course not new to you) is the legend of Queen Dagmar, given in this number! A noble race, the Danes: glad am I to see their blood about to refresh that which runs in the royal veins of England. Sorry and ashamed to see a Russell bullying and insulting them.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

How greatly Borrow was disappointed at the comparative failure of *Wild Wales* may be gathered from a

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curt message to his publisher which I find among his papers:

Mr. Borrow has been applied to by a country bookseller, who is desirous of knowing why there is not another edition of *Wild Wales*, as he cannot procure a copy of the book, for which he receives frequent orders. That it was not published in a cheap form as soon as the edition of 1862 was exhausted has caused much surprise.

Borrow, it will be remembered, left Wales at Chepstow, as recorded in the hundred and ninth and final chapter of *Wild Wales*, "where I purchased a first class ticket, and ensconcing myself in a comfortable carriage, was soon on my way to London, where I arrived at about four o'clock in the morning." In the following letter to his wife there is a slight discrepancy, of no importance, as to time:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

53A PALL MALL, LONDON.

DEAR WIFE CARRETA,—I arrived here about five o'clock this morning—time I saw you. I have walked about 250 miles. I walked the whole way from the North to the South—then turning to the East traversed Glamorganshire and the county of Monmouth, and came out at Chepstow. My boots were worn up by the time I reached Swansea, and was obliged to get them new soled and welted. I have seen wonderful mountains, waterfalls, and people. On the other side of the Black Mountains I met a cartload of gypsies; they were in a dreadful rage and were abusing the country right and left. My last ninety miles proved not very comfortable, there was so much rain. Pray let me have some money by Monday as I am nearly without any, as you may well suppose, for I was three weeks on my journey. I left you on a Thursday, and reached Chepstow yesterday, Thursday, evening. I hope you, my mother, and Hen. are well. I have seen Murray and Cooke.—God bless you, yours,

GEORGE BORROW.

(Keep this.)

Before Borrow put the finishing touches to *Wild Wales* he repeated his visit of 1854. This was in 1857, the year of *The Romany Rye*. Dr. Knapp records the fact through a letter to Mr. John Murray from Shrewsbury, in which he discusses the possibility of a second edition of *The Romany Rye*: "I have lately been taking a walk in Wales of up-

## "Wild Wales"

wards of five hundred miles," he writes. This tour lasted from August 23rd to October 5th. I find four letters to his wife that were written in this holiday. He does not seem to have made any use of this second tour in his *Wild Wales*, although I have abundance of manuscript notes upon it in my possession.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

TENBY, *Tuesday, 25.*

MY DEAR CARRETA,—Since writing to you I have been rather unwell and was obliged to remain two days at Sandypool. The weather has been horribly hot and affected my head and likewise my sight slightly; moreover one of the shoes hurt my foot. I came to this place to-day and shall presently leave it for Pembroke on my way back. I shall write to you from there. I shall return by Cardigan. What I want you to do is to write to me directed to the post office, Cardigan (in Cardiganshire), and either inclose a post office order for five pounds or an order from Lloyd and Co. on the banker of that place for the same sum; but at any rate write or I shall not know what to do. I would return by railroad, but in that event I must go to London, for there are no railroads from here to Shrewsbury. I wish moreover to see a little more. Just speak to the banker and don't lose any time. Send letter, and either order in it, or say that I can get it at the bankers. I hope all is well. God bless you and Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

TRECASTLE, BRECKNOCKSHIRE,  
SOUTH WALES, *August 17th.*

DEAR CARRETA,—I write to you a few words from this place; to-morrow I am going to Llandovery and from there to Carmarthen; for the first three or four days I had dreadful weather. I got only to Worthen the first day, twelve miles—on the next to Montgomery, and so on. It is now very hot, but I am very well, much better than at Shrewsbury. I hope in a few days to write to you again, and soon to be back to you. God bless you and Hen.

G. BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

LAMPETER, *3rd September 1857.*

MY DEAR CARRETA,—I am making the best of my way to Shrewsbury (My face is turned towards Mama). I write this from Lampeter, where there is a college for educating clergymen

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intended for Wales, which I am going to see. I shall then start for Radnor by Tregaron, and hope soon to be in England. I have seen an enormous deal since I have been away, and have walked several hundred miles. Amongst other places I have seen St. David's, a wonderful half ruinous cathedral on the S. Western end of Pembrokeshire, but I shall be glad to get back. God bless you and Hen. GEORGE BORROW.

Henrietta! Do you know who is handsome?

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

PRESTEYNE, RADNORSHIRE, *Monday morning.*

DEAR CARRETA,—I am just going to start for Ludlow, and hope to be at Shrewsbury on Tuesday night if not on Monday morning. God bless you and Hen. G. BORROW.

When I get back I shall have walked more than 400 miles.

In *Wild Wales* we have George Borrow in his most genial mood. There are none of the hair-breadth escapes and grim experiences of *The Bible in Spain*, none of the romance and the glamour of *Lavengro* and its sequel, but there is good humour, a humour that does not obtain in the three more important works, and there is an amazing amount of frank candour of a biographical kind. We even have a reference to Isopel Berners, referred to by Captain Bosvile as "the young woman you used to keep company with . . . a fine young woman and a virtuous." It is the happiest of Borrow's books, and not unnaturally. He was having a genuine holiday, and he had the companionship during a part of it of his wife and daughter, of whom he was, as this book is partly written to prove, very genuinely fond. He also enjoyed the singularly felicitous experience of harking back upon some of his earliest memories. He was able to retrace the steps he took in the Welsh language during his boyhood:

That night I sat up very late reading the life of Twm O'r Nant, written by himself in choice Welsh. . . . The life I had read in my boyhood in an old Welsh magazine, and I now read it again with great zest, and no wonder, as it is probably the most remarkable autobiography ever penned.

It is in this ecstatic mood that he passes through Wales. Let me recall the eulogy on "Gronwy" Owen, and here

## “ Wild Wales ”

it may be said that Borrow rarely got his spelling correct of the proper names of his various literary heroes, in the various Norse and Celtic tongues in which he delighted. But how much Borrow delighted in his poets may be seen by his eulogy on Goronwy Owen, which in its pathos recalls Carlyle's similar eulogies over poor German scholars who interested him, Jean Paul Richter and Heyne, for example. Borrow ignored Owen's persistent intemperance and general impracticability. Here and here only, indeed, does he remind one of Carlyle. He had a great capacity for hero-worship, although the two were not interested in the same heroes. His hero-worship of Owen took him over large tracks of country in search of that poet's birthplace. He writes of the delight he takes in inspecting the birth-places and haunts of poets. "It is because I am fond of poetry, poets, and their haunts, that I am come to Anglesey." "I proceeded on my way," he says elsewhere, "in high spirits indeed, having now seen not only the tomb of the Tudors, but one of those sober poets for which Anglesey has always been so famous." And thus it is that *Wild Wales* is a high-spirited book, which will always be a delight and a joy not only to Welshmen, who, it may be hoped, have by this time forgiven "the ecclesiastical cat" of Llangollen, but to all who rejoice in the great classics of the English tongue.

## CHAPTER XXXII

LIFE IN LONDON, 1860-1874

GEORGE BORROW's earlier visits to London are duly recorded, with that glamour of which he was a master, in the pages of *Lavengro*. Who can cross London Bridge even to-day without thinking of the apple-woman and her copy of *Moll Flanders*; and many passages of Borrow's great book make a very special appeal to the lover of London. Then there was that visit to the Bible Society's office made on foot from Norwich, and the expedition a few months later to pass an examination in the Manchu language. When he became a country squire and the author of the very successful *Bible in Spain* Borrow frequently visited London, and his various residences may be traced from his letters. Take, for example, these five notes to his wife, the first apparently written in 1843, but all undated:

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

*Tuesday afternoon.*

MY DEAR WIFE,—I just write you a line to tell you that I am tolerably well as I hope you are. Every thing is in confusion abroad. The French King has disappeared and will probably never be heard of, though they are expecting him in England. Funds are down nearly to eighty. The Government have given up the income tax and people are very glad of it. *I am not.* With respect to the funds, if I were to sell out I should not know what to do with the money. J. says they will rise. I do not think they will, they may, however, fluctuate a little.—Keep up your spirits, my heart's dearest, and kiss old Hen. for me.

G. B.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

53a, PALL MALL.

DEAR WIFE CARRETA,—I write you a line as I suppose you will be glad to have one. I dine to-night with Murray and Cooke, and we are going to talk over about *The Sleeping Bard*;

## Life in London, 1860-1874

both are very civil. I have been reading hard at the Museum and have lost no time. Yesterday I went to Greenwich to see the Leviathan. It is almost terrible to look at, and seems too large for the river. It resembles a floating town—the paddle is 60 feet high. A tall man can stand up in the funnel as it lies down. 'Tis sad, however, that money is rather scarce. I walked over Blackheath and thought of poor dear Mrs. Watson. I have just had a note from FitzGerald. We have had some rain but not very much. London is very gloomy in rainy weather. I was hoping that I should have a letter from you this morning. I hope you and Hen. have been well.—God bless you. GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

PALL MALL, 53a, Saturday.

DEAR CARRETA,—I am thinking of coming to you on Thursday. I do not know that I can do anything more here, and the dulness of the weather and the mists are making me ill. Please to send another five pound note by Tuesday morning. I have spent scarcely anything of that which you sent except what I owe to Mrs. W., but I wish to have money in my pocket, and Murray and Cooke are going to dine with me on Tuesday; I shall be glad to be with you again, for I am very much in want of your society. I miss very much my walks at Llangollen by the quiet canal; but what's to be done? Everything seems nearly at a standstill in London, on account of this wretched war, at which it appears to me the English are getting the worst, notwithstanding their boasting. They thought to settle it in an autumn's day; they little knew the Russians, and they did not reflect that just after autumn comes winter, which has ever been the Russians' friend. Have you heard anything about the rent of the Cottage? I should have been glad to hear from you this morning. Give my love to Hen. and may God bless you, dear.

GEORGE BORROW.

(Keep this.)

TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

NO. 53a PALL MALL.

DEAR CARRETA,—I hope you received my last letter written on Tuesday. I am glad that I came to London. I find myself much the better for having done so. I was going on in a very spiritless manner. Everybody I have met seems very kind and glad to see me. Murray seems to be thoroughly staunch. Cooke, to whom I mentioned the F.T., says that Murray was delighted with the idea, and will be very glad of the 4th of Lavengro. I am going to dine with Murray to-day, Thursday. W. called upon me to-day. I wish you would send me a blank cheque, in a letter so that if I want money I may be able to draw for a little.

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I shall not be long from home, but now I am here I wish to do all that's necessary. If you send me a blank cheque, I suppose W. or Murray would give me the money. I hope you got my last letter. I received yours, and Cooke has just sent the two copies of *Lavengro* you wrote for, and I believe some engravings of the picture. I shall wish to return by the packet if possible, and will let you know when I am coming. I hope to write again short' so tell you some more news. How is mother and Hen., and how are all the creatures? I hope all well. I trust you like all I propose—now I am here I want to get two or three things, to go to the Museum, and to arrange matters. God bless you. Love to mother and Hen.

GEORGE BORROW.

## TO MRS. GEORGE BORROW

NO. 58 JERMYN STREET, ST. JAMES.

DEAR CARRIE,—I got here safe, and upon the whole had not so bad a journey as might be expected. I put up at the Spread Eagle for the night for I was tired and hungry; have got into my old lodgings as you see, those on the second floor, they are very nice ones, with every convenience; they are expensive, it is true, but they are *cheerful*, which is a grand consideration for me. I have as yet seen nobody, for it is only now a little past eleven. I can scarcely at present tell you what my plans are, perhaps to-morrow I shall write again. Kiss Hen., and God bless you.

G. B.

Borrow was in London in 1845 and again in 1846. There must have been other occasional visits on the way to this or that starting point of his annual holiday, but in 1860 Borrow took a house in London, and he resided there until 1874, when he returned to Oulton. In a letter to Mr. John Murray, written from Ireland in November, 1859, Mrs. Borrow writes to the effect that in the spring of the following year she will wish to look round "and select a pleasant holiday residence within three to ten miles of London." There is no doubt that a succession of winters on Oulton Broad had been very detrimental to Mrs. Borrow's health, although they had no effect on Borrow, who bathed there with equal indifference in winter as in summer, having, as he tells us in *Wild Wales*, "always had the health of an elephant." And so Borrow and his wife arrived in London in June, and took temporary lodgings at 21 Montagu Street, Portman Square. In September they went into occupation of a house in Brompton—22 Hereford Square, which is now commemorated by a County Council tablet. Here Borrow

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resided for fourteen years, and here his wife died on 30th January, 1869. She was buried in Brompton Cemetery, where Borrow was laid beside her twelve years later. For neighbours on the one side the Borrowes had Mr. Robert Collinson and, on the other, Miss Frances Power Cobbe and her companion, Miss M. C. Lloyd. From Miss Cobbe we have occasional glimpses of Borrow, all of them unkindly. She was of Irish extraction, her father having been grandson of Charles Cobbe, Archbishop of Dublin. Miss Cobbe was an active woman in all kinds of journalistic and philanthropic enterprises in the London of the 'seventies and 'eighties of the last century, writing in particular in the now defunct newspaper, the *Echo*, and she wrote dozens of books and pamphlets, all of them forgotten except her *Autobiography*, in which she devoted several pages to her neighbour in Hereford Square. Borrow had no sympathy with fanatical women with many "isms," and the pair did not agree, although many neighbourly courtesies passed between them for a time. Here is an extract from Miss Cobbe's *Autobiography*:

George Borrow, who, if he were not a gypsy by blood, ought to have been one, was for some years our near neighbour in Hereford Square. My friend was amused by his quaint stories and his (real or sham) enthusiasm for Wales, and cultivated his acquaintance. I never liked him, thinking him more or less of a hypocrite. His missions, recorded in *The Bible in Spain*, and his translations of the Scriptures into the out-of-the-way tongues, for which he had a gift, were by no means consonant with his real opinions concerning the veracity of the said Bible.

One only needs to quote this by the light of the story as told so far in these pages to see how entirely Miss Cobbe misunderstood Borrow, or rather how little insight she was able to bring to a study of his curious character. The rest of her attempt at interpretation is largely taken up to demonstrate how much more clever and more learned she was than Borrow. Altogether it is a sorry spectacle, this of the pseudo-philanthropist relating her conversations with a man broken by misfortune and the death of his wife. Many of Miss Cobbe's statements have passed into current acceptance. I do not find them convincing. Archdeacon Whately on the other hand tells us that he always found

## The Life of George Borrow

Borrow "most civil and hospitable," and his sister gives us the following "impression":

When Mr. Borrow returned from this Spanish journey, which had been full, as we all know, of most entertaining adventures, related with much liveliness and spirit by himself, he was regarded as a kind of "lion" in the literary circles of London. When we first saw him it was at the house of a lady who took great pleasure in gathering "celebrities" in various ways around her, and our party was struck with the appearance of this renowned traveller—a tall, thin, spare man with prematurely white hair and intensely dark eyes, as he stood upright against the wall of one of the drawing-rooms and received the homage of lion-hunting guests, and listened in silence to their unsuccessful attempts to make him talk.

During this sojourn in London, which was undertaken because Oulton and Yarmouth did not agree with his wife, Borrow suffered the tragedy of her loss. Borrow dragged on his existence in London for another five years, a much broken man. It is extraordinary how little we know of Borrow during that fourteen years' sojourn in London; how rarely we meet him in the literary memoirs of this period. Happily one or two pleasant friendships relieved the sadness of his days; and in particular the reminiscences of Walter Theodore Watts-Dunton assist us to a more correct appreciation of the Borrow of these last years of London life. Of Mr. Watts-Dunton's "memories," we shall write in our next chapter. Here it remains only to note that Borrow still continued to interest himself in his various efforts at translation, and in 1861 and 1862 the editor of *Once a Week* printed various ballads and stories from his pen. The volumes of this periodical are before me, and I find illustrations by Sir John Millais, Sir E. J. Poynter, Simeon Solomon and George Du Maurier; stories by Mrs. Henry Wood and Harriet Martineau, and articles by Walter Thornbury.

In 1862 *Wild Wales* was published, as we have seen. In 1865 Henrietta married William MacOubrey, and in the following year, Borrow and his wife went to visit the pair in their Belfast home. In the beginning of the year 1869 Mrs. Borrow died, aged seventy-three. There are no records of the tragedy that are worth perpetuating. Borrow consumed his own smoke. With his wife's death his life was

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indeed a wreck. No wonder he was so "rude" to that least perceptive of women, Miss Cobbe. Some four or five years more Borrow lingered on in London, cheered at times by walks and talks with Gordon Hake and Watts-Dunton, and he then returned to Oulton—a most friendless man.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### FRIENDS OF LATER YEARS

WE should know little enough of George Borrow's later years were it not for his friendship with Thomas Gordon Hake and Theodore Watts-Dunton. Hake was born in 1809 and died in 1895. In 1839 he settled at Bury St. Edmunds as a physician, and he resided there until 1853. Here he was frequently visited by the Borrowes. We have already quoted his prophecy concerning *Lavengro* that "its roots will strike deep into the soil of English letters." In 1853 Dr. Hake and his family left Bury for the United States, where they resided for some years. Returning to England they lived at Roehampton and met Borrow occasionally in London. During these years Hake was, according to Mr. W. M. Rossetti, "the earthly Providence of the Rossetti family," but he was not, as his *Memoirs* show, equally devoted to Borrow. In 1872, however, he went to live in Germany and Italy for a considerable period. Concerning the relationship between Borrow and Hake, Mr. Watts-Dunton has written:

After Hake went to live in Germany, Borrow told me a good deal about their intimacy, and also about his own early life: for, reticent as he naturally was, he and I got to be confidential and intimate. His friendship with Hake began when Hake was practising as a physician in Norfolk. It lasted during the greater part of Borrow's later life. When Borrow was living in London his great delight was to walk over on Sundays from Hereford Square to Coombe End, call upon Hake, and take a stroll with him over Richmond Park. They both had a passion for herons and for deer. At that time Hake was a very intimate friend of my own, and having had the good fortune to be introduced by him to Borrow I used to join the two in their walks. Afterwards, when Hake went to live in Germany, I used to take those walks with Borrow alone. Two more interesting men it would be impossible to meet. The remarkable thing was that there was between them no sort of intellectual sympathy. In style, in education, in experience, whatever Hake was, Borrow was not. Borrow knew almost nothing of Hake's writings, either in prose

## Friends of Later Years

or in verse. His ideal poet was Pope, and when he read, or rather looked into, Hake's *World's Epitaph*, he thought he did Hake the greatest honour by saying, "there are lines here and there that are nigh as good as Pope!"

On the other hand, Hake's acquaintance with Borrow's works was far behind that of some Borrowians who did not know Lavengro in the flesh, such as Saintsbury and Mr. Birrell. Borrow was shy, angular, eccentric, rustic in accent and in locution, but with a charm for me, at least, that was irresistible. Hake was polished, easy and urbane in everything, and, although not without prejudice and bias, ready to shine generally in any society.

So far as Hake was concerned the sole link between them was that of reminiscence of earlier days and adventures in Borrow's beloved East Anglia. Among many proofs I would adduce of this I will give one. I am the possessor of the MS. of Borrow's *Gypsies of Spain*, written partly in a Spanish notebook as he moved about Spain in his colporteur days. It was my wish that Hake would leave behind him some memorial of Borrow more worthy of himself and his 'riend than those brief reminiscences contained in *Memoirs of Eighty Years*. I took to Hake this precious relic of one of the most wonderful men of the nineteenth century, in order to discuss with him differences between the MS. and the printed text. Hake was writing in his invalid chair,—writing verses. "What does it all matter?" he said. "I do not think you understand Lavengro," I said. Hake replied, "And yet Lavengro had an advantage over me, for *he* understood *nobody*. Every individuality with which he was brought into contact had, as no one knows better than you, to be tinged with colours of his own before he could see it at all." That, of course, was true enough; and Hake's asperities when speaking of Borrow in *Memoirs of Eighty Years*,—asperities which have vexed a good many Borrowians,—simply arose from the fact that it was impossible for two such men to understand each other. When I told him of Mr. Lang's angry onslaught upon Borrow in his notes to the *Waverley Novels*, on account of his attacks upon Scott, he said, "Well, does he not deserve it?" When I told him of Miss Cobbe's description of Borrow as a *poseur*, he said to me, "I told you the same scores of times. But I saw Borrow had bewitched you during that first walk under the rainbow in Richmond Park. It was that rainbow, I think, that befooled you." Borrow's affection for Hake, however, was both strong and deep, as I saw after Hake had gone to Germany and in a way dropped out of Borrow's ken. Yet Hake was as good a man as ever Borrow was, and for certain others with whom he was brought in contact as full of a genuine affection as Borrow was himself.

Mr. Watts-Dunton refers here to Hake's asperities when speaking of Borrow. They are very marked in the *Memoirs of Eighty Years*, and nearly all the stories of Borrow's

## The Life of George Borrow

eccentricities that have been served up to us by Borrow's biographers are due to Hake. It is here we read of his snub to Thackeray. "Have you read my Snob Papers in *Punch*?" Thackeray asked him. "In *Punch*?" Borrow replied. "It is a periodical I never look at." He was equally rude, or shall we say Johnsonian, according to Hake, when Miss Agnes Strickland asked him if she might send him her *Queens of England*. He exclaimed, "For God's sake don't, madam; I should not know where to put them or what to do with them." Hake is responsible also for that other story about the woman who, desirous of pleasing him, said, "Oh, Mr. Borrow, I have read your books with so much pleasure!" On which he exclaimed, "Pray, what books do you mean, madam? Do you mean my account books?" Dr. Johnson was guilty of many such vagaries, and the readers of Boswell have forgiven him everything because they are conveyed to them through the medium of a hero-worshipper. Borrow never had a Boswell, and despised the literary class so much that he never found anything in the shape of an apologist until he had been long dead.

I find no letter from Hake to Borrow among my papers, but three to his wife:

BURY ST. EDMUNDS, Jan. 27, '48. *Evening*.

MY DEAR MRS. BORROW,—It gave me great pleasure, as it always does, to see your handwriting; and as respects the subject of your note you may make yourself quite easy, for I believe the idea has crossed no other mind than your own. How sorry I am to learn that you have been so unwell since your visit to us. I hope that by care you will get strong during this bracing weather. I wish that you were already nearer to us, and cannot resign the hope that we shall yet enjoy the happiness of having you as our neighbours. I have felt a strong friendship for Mr. Borrow's mind for many years, and have ardently wished from time to time to know him, and to have realised my desire I consider one of the most happy events of my life. Until lately, dear Mrs. Borrow, I have had no opportunity of knowing you and your sweet simple-hearted child; but now I hope nothing will occur to interrupt a regard and friendship which I and Mrs. Hake feel most truly towards you all. Tell Mr. Borrow how much we should like to be his Sinbad. I wish he would bring you all and his papers and come again to look about him. There is an old hall at Tostock, which, I hear to-day, is quite dry; if so it is worthy of your attention. It is a mile from the Elmswell station, which is ten minutes' time from Bury. This

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hall has got a bad name from having been long vacant, but some friends of mine have been over it and they tell me there is not a damp spot on the premises. It is seven miles from Bury. Mrs. Hake has written about a house at Rougham, but had no answer. The cottage at Farnham is to let again. I know not whether Mr. Harvey will make an effort for it. A little change would do you all good, and we can receive Miss Clarke without any difficulty. Give our kindest regards to your party, and believe me, dear Mrs. Borrow, sincerely yours, T. G. HAKE.

BURY ST. EDMUNDS, *January 19th, '49.*

MY DEAR MRS. BORROW,—The sight of your handwriting is always a luxury—but you say nothing about coming to see us. We are pleased to get good accounts of your party, and only wish you could report better of yourself. I must take you fairly in hand when you come again to the ancient quarters, for such they are becoming now from your long absence. You might try bismuth and extract of hop, which is often very strengthening to the stomach. Five grains of extract of hop and five grains of trisnitrate of bismuth made into two pills, which are to be taken at eleven and repeated at four—daily. I am so pleased to learn that Miss Clarke is better, as well as Mr. Borrow. I hope that on some occasion the morphia may be of great comfort to him should his night watchings return. It is good news that the proofs are advancing—I hope towards a speedy end. Messrs. Oakes and Co.'s Bank is as safe as any in the kingdom and more substantial than any in this county. It must be safe, for the partners are men of large property, and of careful habits. I am happy to say we are all well here, but my brother's house in town is a scene of sad trouble. He is himself laid up with bad scarlet fever as well as five children, all severely attacked. One they have lost of this fearful complaint.

Give our kindest regards to Mr. Borrow and accept them yourselves. Ever, dear Mrs. Borrow, sincerely yours,  
T. G. HAKE.

I send Beethoven's epitaph for Miss Clarke's album according to promise. It is *not* by Wordsworth.

BURY ST. EDMUNDS, *June 24, '51.*

MY DEAR MRS. BORROW,—I am very sorry to hear that you are not feeling strong, and that these flushes of heat are so frequent and troublesome. I will prescribe a medicine for you which I hope may prove serviceable. Let me hear again about your health, and be assured you cannot possibly give me any trouble.

I am also glad to hear of Mr. Borrow. I envy him his bath. I am looking out anxiously for the new quarterly reviews. I wonder whether the *Quarterly* will contain anything. Is there a prospect of vol. iv.? I really look to passing a day and two half

## The Life of George Borrow

days with you, and to bringing Mrs. Hake to your classic soil some time in August—if we are not inconveniencing you in your charming and snug cottage. I hope Miss Clarke is well. Our united kind regards to you all. George is quite brisk and saucy—Lucy and the infant have not been well. Mrs. Hake has better accounts from Bath. Believe me, dear Mrs. Borrow, very sincerely yours,

T. G. HAKE.

Mr. Donne was pleased that Mr. Borrow liked his notice in *Tait*. You can take a little cold sherry and water after your dinner.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### HENRIETTA CLARKE

BORROW never had a child, but happy for him was the part played by his stepdaughter Henrietta in his life. She was twenty-three years old when her mother married him, and it is clear to me that she was from the beginning of their friendship and even to the end of his life devoted to her stepfather. Readers of *Wild Wales* will recall not only the tribute that Borrow pays to her, which we have already quoted, in which he refers to her "good qualities and many accomplishments," but the other pleasant references in that book. "Henrietta," he says in one passage, "played on the guitar<sup>1</sup> and sang a Spanish song, to the great delight of John Jones." When climbing Snowdon he is keen in his praises of the endurance of "the gallant girl." As against all this, there is an undercurrent of depreciation of his stepdaughter among Borrow's biographers. The picture of Borrow's home in later life at Oulton is presented by them with sordid details. The Oulton tradition which still survives among the few inhabitants who lived near the Broad at Borrow's death in 1881, and still reside there, is of an ill-kept home, supremely untidy, and it is as a final indictment of his daughter's callousness that we have the following gruesome picture by Dr. Knapp:

On the 26th of July 1881 Mr. Borrow was found dead in his house at Oulton. The circumstances were these. His stepdaughter and her husband drove to Lowestoft in the morning on some business of their own, leaving Mr. Borrow without a living soul in the house with him. He had earnestly requested them not to go away because he felt that he was in a dying state; but the response intimated that he had often expressed the same feeling before, and his fears had proved groundless. During the interval of these few hours of abandonment nothing can palliate or excuse, George Borrow died as he had lived—*alone*! His age was seventy-eight years and twenty-one days.

<sup>1</sup> Henrietta's guitar is now in my possession and is a very handsome instrument.

## The Life of George Borrow

Dr. Knapp no doubt believed all this;<sup>1</sup> it is endorsed by the village gossip of the past thirty years, and the mythical tragedy is even heightened by a further story of a farm tumbril which carried poor Borrow's body to the railway station when it was being conveyed to London to be buried beside his wife in Brompton Cemetery.

The tumbril story—whether correct or otherwise—is a matter of indifference to me. The legend of the neglect of Borrow in his last moments is, however, of importance, and the charge can easily be disproved. I have before me Mrs. MacOubrey's diary for 1881. I have many such diaries for a long period of years, but this for 1881 is of particular moment. Here, under the date July 26th, we find the brief note, *George Borrow died at three o'clock this morning*. It is scarcely possible that Borrow's stepdaughter and her husband could have left him alone at three o'clock in the morning in order to drive into Lowestoft, less than two miles distant. At this time, be it remembered, Dr. MacOubrey was eighty-one years of age. Now, as to the general untidiness of Borrow's home at the time of his death—the point is a distasteful one, but it had better be faced. Henrietta was nineteen years of age when her mother married Borrow. She was sixty-four at the time of his death, and her husband, as I have said, was eighty-one years of age at that time, being three years older than Borrow. Here we have three very elderly people keeping house together and little accustomed overmuch to the assistance of domestic servants. The situation at once becomes clear. Mrs. Borrow had a genius for housekeeping and for management. She watched over her husband, kept his accounts, held the family purse, managed all his affairs. She "managed" her daughter also, delighting in that daughter's accomplishments of drawing and botany, to which may be added a zeal for the writing of stories which does not seem, judging from the many manuscripts in her handwriting that I have burnt, to have received much editorial encouragement. In short, Henrietta was not domesticated. But just as I have proved in preceding chapters that Borrow was happy in his married life, so I would urge that as far as a somewhat disappointed career

<sup>1</sup> Henrietta MacOubrey put every difficulty in the way of Dr. Knapp, and I hold many letters from her strongly denouncing his *Life*.

## Henrietta Clarke

would permit to the sadly bereaved author he was happy in his family circle to the end. It was at his initiative that, when he had returned to Oulton after the death of his wife, his daughter and her husband came to live with him. He declared that to live alone was no longer tolerable, and they gave up their own home in London to join him at Oulton.

A new glimpse of Borrow on his domestic side has been offered to the public even as this book is passing through the press. Mr. S. H. Baldrey, a Norwich solicitor, has given his reminiscences of the author of *Lavengro* to the leading newspaper of that city. Mr. Baldrey is the stepson of the late John Pilgrim of the firm of Jay and Pilgrim, who were Borrow's solicitors at Norwich in the later years of his life. One at least of Mr. Baldrey's many reminiscences has in it an element of romance; that in which he recalls Mrs. Borrow and her daughter:

Mrs. Borrow always struck me as a dear old creature. When Borrow married her she was a widow with one daughter, Henrietta Clarke. The old lady used to dress in black silk. She had little silver-grey corkscrew curls down the side of her face; and she wore a lace cap with a mauve ribbon on top, quite in the Early Victorian style. I remember that on one occasion when she and Miss Clarke had come to Brunswick House they were talking with my mother in the temporary absence of George Borrow, who, so far as I can recall, had gone into another room to discuss business with John Pilgrim.

"Ah!" she said, "George is a good man, but he is a strange creature. Do you know he will say to me after breakfast, 'Mary, I am going for a walk,' and then I do not see anything more of him for three months. And all the time he will be walking miles and miles. Once he went right into Scotland, and never once slept in a house. He took not even a handbag with him or a clean shirt, but lived just like any old tramp."

Mr. Baldrey is clearly in error here, or shall we say that Mrs. Borrow humorously exaggerated? We have seen that Borrow's annual holiday was a matter of careful arrangement, and his knapsack or satchel is frequently referred to in his descriptions of his various tours. But the matter is of little importance, and Mr. Baldrey's pictures of Borrow are excellent, including that of his personal appearance:

As I recall him, he was a fine, powerfully built man of about six feet high. He had a clean-shaven face with a fresh complexion, almost approaching to the florid, and never a wrinkle,

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even at sixty, except at the corners of his dark and rather prominent eyes. He had a shock of silvery white hair. He always wore a very badly brushed silk hat, a black frock coat and trousers, the coat all buttoned down before; low shoes and white socks, with a couple of inches of white showing between the shoes and the trousers. He was a tireless walker, with extraordinary powers of endurance, and was also very handy with his fists, as in those days a gentleman required to be, more than he does now.

Mr. John Pilgrim lived at Brunswick House, on the Newmarket Road, Norwich, and here Borrow frequently visited him. Mr. Baldrey recalls one particular visit:

I have a curious recollection of his dining one night at Brunswick House. John Pilgrim, who was a careful, abstemious man, never took more than two glasses of port at dinner. "John," said Borrow, "this is a good port. I prefer Burgundy if you can get it good; but, lord, you cannot get it now." It so happened that Mr. Pilgrim had some fine old Clos-Vougeot in the cellar. "I think," said he, "I can give you a good drop of Burgundy." A bottle was sent for, and Borrow finished it, alone and unaided. "Well," he remarked, "I think this is a good Burgundy. But I'm not quite certain. I should like to try a little more." Another bottle was called up, and the guest finished it to the last drop. "I am still," he said, "not quite sure about it, but I shall know in the morning." The next morning Mr. Pilgrim and I were leaving for the office, when Borrow came up the garden path waving his arms like a windmill. "Oh, John," he said, "that was Burgundy! When I woke up this morning it was coursing through my veins like fire." And yet Borrow was not a man to drink to excess. I cannot imagine him being the worse for liquor. He had wonderful health and digestion. Neither a gourmand nor a gourmet, he could take down anything, and be none the worse for it. I don't think you could have made him drunk if you tried.

And here is a glimpse of Borrow after his wife's death, for which we are grateful to Mr. Baldrey:

After the funeral of Mrs. Borrow he came to Norwich, and took me over to Dulton with him. He was silent all the way. When we got to the little white wicket gate before the approach to the house he took off his hat and began to beat his breast like an Oriental. He cried aloud all the way up the path. He calmed himself, however, by the time that Mr. Crabbe had opened the door and asked us in. Crabbe brought in some wine, and we all sat down to table. I sat opposite to Mrs. Crabbe; her husband was on my left hand. Borrow sat at one end of the table, and the chair at the opposite end was left vacant. We were talking

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in a casual way when Borrow, pointing to the empty chair, said with profound emotion, "There! It was there that I first saw her." It was a curious coincidence that though there were four of us we should have left that particular seat unoccupied at a little table of about four feet square.

But this is a lengthy digression from the story of Henrietta Clarke, who married William MacOubrey, an Irishman—and an Orangeman—from Belfast in 1865. The pair lived first in Belfast and afterwards at 80 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. Before his marriage he had practised at 134 Sloane Street, London. MacOubrey, although there had been some doubt cast upon the statement, was a Doctor of Medicine of Trinity College, Dublin, and a Barrister-at-Law. Within his limitations he was an accomplished man, and before me lie not only documentary evidence of his M.D. and his legal status, but several printed pamphlets that bear his name. What is of more importance, the many letters from and to his wife that have passed through my hands and have been consigned to the flames prove that husband and wife lived on most affectionate terms.

It is natural that Borrow's correspondence with his step-daughter should have been of a somewhat private character, and I therefore publish only a selection from his letters to her, believing however that they will modify an existing tradition very considerably:

### TO MRS. MACOUBREY

DEAR HENRIETTA,—Have you heard from the gentleman whom you said you would write to about the farm? Mr. C. came over the other day and I mentioned the matter to him, but he told me that he was on the eve of going to London on law business and should be absent for some time. His son is in Cambridge. I am afraid that it will be no easy matter to find a desirable tenant and that none are likely to apply but a set of needy speculators; indeed, there is a general dearth of money. How is Dr. M.? God bless you!

GEORGE BORROW.

### TO MRS. MACOUBREY

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I have received some of the rent and send a cheque for eight pounds. Have the kindness to acknowledge the receipt of same by return of post. As soon as you arrive in London, let me know, and I will send a cheque for ten pounds.

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which I believe will pay your interest up to Midsummer. If there is anything incorrect pray inform me. God bless you. Kind regards to Miss Harvey. GEORGE BORROW.

## TO MRS. MACOUBREY

DEAR HENRIETTA,—As soon as Smith has paid his Michaelmas rent I will settle your interest up to Midsummer. Twenty-one pounds was, I think, then due to you, as you received five pounds on the account of the present year. If, however, you are in want of money let me know forthwith, and I will send you a small cheque. The document which I mentioned has been witnessed by Mrs. Church and her daughter. It is in one of the little tin boxes on the lower shelf of the closet nearest to the window in my bedroom. I was over at Mattishall some weeks ago. Things there look very unsatisfactory. H. and his mother now owe me £20 or more. The other man a year's rent for a cottage and garden, and two years' rent for the gardens of two cottages unoccupied. I am just returned from Norwich where I have been to speak to F. I have been again pestered by Pilgrim's successor about the insurance of the property. He pretends to have insured again. A more impudent thing was probably never heard of. He is no agent of mine, and I will have no communication with him. I have insured myself in the Union Office, and have lately received my second policy. I have now paid upwards of twelve pounds for policies. F. says that he told him months ago that the demand he made would not be allowed, that I insured myself and was my own agent, and that as he shall see him in a few days he will tell him so again. Oh what a source of trouble that wretched fellow Pilgrim has been both to you and me.

I wish very much to come up to London. But I cannot leave the country under present circumstances. There is not a person in these parts in whom I can place the slightest confidence. I must inform you that at our interview F. said not a word about the matter in Chancery. God bless you. Kind remembrances to Dr. M. GEORGE BORROW.

## TO MRS. MACOUBREY

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I wish to know how you are. I shall shortly send a cheque for thirteen pounds, which I believe will settle the interest account up to Michaelmas. If you see anything inaccurate pray inform me. I am at present tolerably well, but of late have been very much troubled with respect to my people. Since I saw you I have been three times over to Mattishall, but with very little profit. The last time I was there I got the key of the house from that fellow Hill, and let the place to another person who I am told is not much better. One comfort is that he cannot be worse. But now there is a difficulty. Hill

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refuses to yield up the land, and has put padlocks on the gates. These I suppose can be removed as he is not in possession of the key of the house. On this point, however, I wish to be certain. As for the house, he and his mother, who is in a kind of partnership with him, have abandoned it for two years, the consequence being that the windows are dashed out, and the place little better than a ruin. During the four years he has occupied the land he has been cropping it, and the crops have invariably been sold before being reaped, and as soon as reaped carried off. During the last two years there has not been a single live thing kept on the premises, not so much as a hen. He now says that there are some things in the house belonging to him. Anything, however, which he has left is of course mine, though I don't believe that what he has left is worth sixpence. I have told the incoming tenant to deliver up nothing, and not permit him to enter the house on any account. He owes me ten or twelve pounds, arrears of rent, and at least fifteen for dilapidations. I think the fellow ought to be threatened with an action, but I know not whom to employ. I don't wish to apply to F. Perhaps Dr. M.'s London friend might be spoken to. I believe Hill's address is Alfred Hill, Mattishall, Norfolk, but the place which he occupied of me is at Mattishall Burgh. I shall be glad to hear from you as soon as is convenient. I have anything but reason to be satisfied with the conduct of S. He is cropping the ground most unmercifully, and is sending sacks of game off the premises every week. Surely he must be mad, as he knows I can turn him out next Michaelmas. God bless you. Kind regards to Dr. M. Take care of this.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. MACQUEBRY

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I was glad to hear that you had obtained your dividend. I was afraid that you would never get it. I shall be happy to see you and Dr. M. about the end of the month. Michaelmas is near at hand, when your half-year's interest becomes due. God bless you. Kind remembrances to Dr. M.

GEORGE BORROW.

OULTON, LOWESTOFT, November 29th, 1874.

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I send a cheque for £15, which will settle the interest account up to Michaelmas last. On receipt of this have the kindness to send me a line. I have been to Norwich, and now know all about your affair. I saw Mr. Durrant, who, it seems, is the real head of the firm to which I go. He received me in the kindest manner, and said he was very glad to see me. I inquired about J.P.'s affairs. He appeared at first not desirous to speak about them, but presently became very communicative. I inquired who had put the matter into Chancery, and he told me he himself, which I was very glad to hear. I asked whether the mortgagees would get their money, and he replied that he

# The Life of George Borrow

had no doubt they eventually would, as far as principal was concerned. I spoke about interest, but on that point he gave me slight hopes. He said that the matter, if not hurried, would turn out tolerably satisfactory, but if it were, very little would be obtained. It appears that the unhappy creature who is gone had been dabbling in post obit bonds, at present almost valueless, but likely to become available. He was in great want of money shortly before he died. Now, dear, pray keep up your spirits. I hope and trust we shall meet about Christmas. Kind regards to Dr. M.

GEORGE BORROW.

Keep this. Send a line by return of post.

TO MRS. MACOUBREY

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I thought I would write to you as it seems a long time since I heard from you. I have been on my expedition and have come back safe. I had a horrible time of it on the sea—small dirty boat crowded with people and rough weather. Poor Mr. Brightwell is I am sorry to say dead—died in January. I saw Mr. J. and P. and had a good deal of conversation with them which I will talk to you about when I see you. Mr. P. sent an officer over to M. I went to Oulton, and as soon as I got there I found one of the farm cottages nearly in ruins; the gable had fallen down—more expense! but I said that some willow trees must be cut down to cover it. The place upon the whole looks very beautiful. C. full of complaints, though I believe he has a fine time of it. He and T. are at daggers drawn. I am sorry to tell you that poor Mr. Leathes is dying—called, but could not see him, but he sent down a kind message to me. The family, however, were rejoiced to see me and wanted me to stay. The scoundrel of a shoemaker did not send the shoes. I thought he would not. The shirt-collars were much too small. I, however, managed to put on the shirts and am glad of them. At Norwich I saw Lucy, who appears to be in good spirits. Many people have suffered dreadfully there from the failure of the Bank—her brother, amongst others, has been let in. I shall have much to tell you when I see you. I am glad the Prussians are getting on so famously. The Pope it seems has written a letter to the King of Prussia and is asking favours of him. A low old fellow!!! Remember me kindly to Miss H., and may God bless you! Bring this back.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. MACOUBREY

March 6, 1873.

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I was so grieved to hear that you were unwell. Pray take care of yourself, and do not go out in this dreadful weather. Send and get, on my account, six bottles of good port wine. Good port may be had at the cellar at the

## Henrietta Clarke

corner of Charles Street, opposite the Hospital near Hereford Square—I think the name of the man is Kitchenham. Were I in London I would bring it myself. Do send for it. May God Almighty bless you!

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. MACOUBREY

NORWICH, July 12, 1873.

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I shall be glad to see you and Dr. M. as soon as you can make it convenient to come. As for my coming up to London it is quite out of the question. I am suffering greatly, and here I am in this solitude without medicine or advice. I want very much to pay you up your interest. I can do so without the slightest inconvenience. I have money. It is well I have, as it seems to be almost my only friend. God bless you. Kind regards to Dr. M.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. MACOUBREY, 50 CHARLOTTE STREET, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON

OULTON, LOWESTOFT, April 1, 1874.

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I have received your letter of the 30th March. Since I last wrote I have not been well. I have had a great pain in the left jaw which almost prevented me from eating. I am, however, better now. I shall be glad to see you and Dr. M. as soon as you can conveniently come. Send me a line to say when I may expect you. I have no engagements. Before you come call at No. 36 to inquire whether anything has been sent there. Leverton had better be employed to make a couple of boxes or cases for the books in the sacks. The sacks can be put on the top in the inside. There is an old coat in one of the sacks in the pocket of which are papers. Let it be put in with its contents just as it is. I wish to have the long white chest and the two deal boxes also brought down. Buy me a thick under-waistcoat like that I am now wearing, and a lighter one for the summer. Worsted socks are of no use—they scarcely last a day. Cotton ones are poor things, but they are better than worsted. Kind regards to Dr. M. God bless you!

Return me this when you come.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. MACOUBREY, 50 CHARLOTTE STREET, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON

OULTON, Nov. 14, 1876.

DEAR HENRIETTA,—You may buy me a large silk handkerchief, like the one you brought before. I shall be glad to see you and Dr. M. I am very unwell.

GEORGE BORROW.

# The Life of George Borrow

TO MRS. MACOUBREY

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I shall be glad to see you and Dr. M. as soon as you can make it convenient. In a day or two the house will be in good repair and very comfortable. I want you to go to the bank and have the cheque placed to my account. Lady Day is nigh at hand, and it must be seen after. Buy for me a pair of those hollow ground razors and tell Dr. M. to bring a little laudanum. Come if you can on the first of March. It is dear Mama's birthday. God bless you! Kind regards to Dr. M.

GEORGE BORROW.

TO MRS. MACOUBREY, 50 CHARLOTTE STREET, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON

MRS. CHURCH'S, LADY'S LANE, NORWICH, *Feb. 28, 1877.*

DEAR HENRIETTA,—I received your letter this morning with the document. The other came to hand at Oulton before I left. I showed Mr. F. the first document on Wednesday, and he expressed then a doubt with regard to the necessity of an affidavit from me, but he said it would perhaps be necessary for him to see the security. I saw him again this morning and he repeated the same thing. To-night he is going to write up to his agent on the subject, and on Monday I am to know what is requisite to be done—therefore pray keep in readiness. On Tuesday, perhaps, I shall return to Oulton, but I don't know. I shall write again on Monday. God bless you.

GEORGE BORROW.

Borrow died, as we have seen, in 1881, and was buried by the side of his wife in Brompton Cemetery. By his will dated 1st December, 1880, he bequeathed all his property to his stepdaughter, making his friend, Elizabeth Harvey, her co-executrix. The will, a copy of which is before me, has no public interest, but it may be noted that Miss Harvey refused to act, as the following letter to Mrs. MacOubrey testifies:

TO MRS. MACOUBREY

BURY ST. EDMUNDS, *August 13th.*

MY DEAREST HENRIETTA,—I was just preparing to write to you when yours arrived together with Mrs. Reeve's despatch. You know how earnestly I desire your welfare—but *because* I do so I earnestly advise you immediately to exercise the right you have of appointing another trustee in my place. I am sure

## Henrietta Clarke

it will be best for you. You ought to have a trustee at least not older than yourself, and one who has health and strength for discharging the office. I *know* what are the duties of a trustee. There's *always* a considerable responsibility involved in the discharge of the duties of a trustee—and it may easily occur that great responsibility may be thrown on them, and it may become an anxious business fit only for those who have youth and health and strength of mind, and are likely to live.

My dear friend, you do not like to realise the old age of your dear friends, but you must consider that I am quite past the age for such an office, and my invalid state often prevents my attending to my own small affairs. I have no relation or confidential friend who can act for me. My executors were Miss Venn and John Venn. Miss Venn departed last February to a better land. John is in such health with heart disease that he cannot move far from his home—he writes as one *ready* and desiring to depart. I do not expect to see *him* again. So you see, my dearest friend, I am not able to undertake this trusteeship, and I think the sooner you consult Mrs. Reeve as to the appointment of another trustee—the better it will be—and the more *permanent*. Had I known it was Mr. Borrow's intention to put down my name I should have prevented it, and he would have seen that an aged and invalid lady was not the person to carry out his wishes—for I am quite unable.

I pray that a fit person may be induced to undertake the business, and that it may please God so to order all for your good. It is indeed the greatest mercy that your dear husband is well enough to afford you such help and such comfort. Pray hire a proper servant who will obey orders.—In haste, ever yrs. affectionately,

E. HARVEY.

Another letter that has some bearing upon Borrow's last days is worth printing here:

TO MRS. MACOUBREY

YARMOUTH, August 19, 1881.

MY DEAR MRS. MACOUBREY,—I was very sorry indeed to hear of Mr. Borrow's death. I thought he looked older the last time I saw him, but with his vigorous constitution I have not thought the end so near. You and Mr. MacOubrey have the comfort of knowing that you have attended affectionately to his declining years, which would otherwise have been very lonely. I have been abroad for a short time, and this ~~has~~ prevented me from replying to your kind letter before. Pray receive the assurance of my sympathy, and with my kind remembrances to Mr. MacOubrey, believe me, yours very truly,

R. H. INGLE PALGRAVE.

## The Life of George Borrow

Three years later Dr. MacOubrey died in his eighty-fourth year, and was interred at Oulton. Mrs. MacOubrey lived for a time at Oulton and then removed to Yarmouth. A letter that she wrote to a friend soon after the death of her husband is perhaps some index to her character:

OULTON COTTAGE, OULTON,  
Nr. LOWESTOFT, Sept. 3rd, 1884.

MY DEAR SIR,—I beg to thank you for your kind thought of me. On Sunday night the 24th Augt., it pleased God to take from me my excellent and beloved husband—his age was nearly 84. He sunk simply from age and weakness. I was his nurse by night and by day, administering constant nourishment, but he became weaker and weaker, till at last "The silver cord was loosed." My dear father died about this time three years since, which makes the blow more stunning. I feel very lonely now in my secluded residence on the banks of the Broad—the music of the wild birds adds not to my pleasure now. Trusting that yourself and Mrs. S—— may long be spared.—Believe me to remain, yours very truly,

HENRIETTA MACOUBREY.

The cottage at Oulton was soon afterwards pulled down, but the summer-house where Borrow wrote a portion of his *Bible in Spain* and his other works remained for some years. That ultimately an entirely new structure took its place may be seen by comparing the roof in Mrs. MacOubrey's drawing with the illustration of the structure as it is to-day. Mrs. MacOubrey died in 1903 at Yarmouth, and the following inscription may be found on her tomb in Oulton Churchyard:

Sacred to the memory of Henrietta Mary, widow of William MacOubrey, only daughter of Lieut. Henry Clarke, R.N., and Mary Skepper, his wife, and stepdaughter of George Henry Borrow, Esq., the celebrated author of *The Bible in Spain*, *The Gypsies of Spain*, *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, *Wild Wales*, and other works and translations. Henrietta Mary MacOubrey was born at Oulton Hall in this Parish, May 17th, 1818, and died 23rd December 1903. "And He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."—Psalm xci. 11.

The following extract from her will is of interest as indicating the trend of a singularly kindly nature. The intimate friends of Mrs. MacOubrey's later years, whose opinion is

## Henrietta Clarke

of more value than that of village gossips, speak of her in terms of sincere affection:

I give the following charitable legacies, namely, to the London Bible Society, in remembrance of the great interest my dear father, George Henry Borrow, took in the success of its great work for the benefit of mankind, the sum of one hundred pounds. To the Foreign Missionary Society the sum of one hundred pounds. To the London Religious Tract Society the sum of one hundred pounds. To the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the sum of one hundred pounds.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE AFTERMATH

"We are all Borrowians now."—AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

It is a curious fact that of only two men of distinction in English letters in these later years can it be said that they lived to a good old age and yet failed of recognition for work that is imperishable. Many poets have died young—Shelley and Keats for example—to whom this public recognition was refused in their lifetime. But given the happiness of reaching middle age, this recognition has never failed. It came, for example, to Wordsworth and Coleridge long after their best work was done. It came with more promptness to all the great Victorian novelists. This recognition did not come in their lifetime to two Suffolk friends, Edward FitzGerald with *Omar Khayyám* and George Borrow with *Lavengro*. In the case of FitzGerald there was probably no consciousness that he had produced a great poem. In any case his sunny Irish temperament could easily have surmounted disappointment if he had expected anything from the world in the way of literary fame. Borrow was quite differently made. He was as intense an egoist as Rousseau, whose work he had probably never read, and would not have appreciated if he had read. He longed for the recognition of the multitude through his books, and thoroughly enjoyed it when it was given to him for a moment—for his *Bible in Spain*. Such appreciation as he received in his lifetime was given to him for that book and for no other. There were here and there enthusiasts for his *Lavengro* and *Romany Rye*. Dr. Jessopp has told us that he was one. But it was not until long after his death that the word "Borrowian"<sup>1</sup> came into the language. Not a single great author among his contemporaries praised him for his *Lavengro*, the book for which we most esteem him to-day. His name is not

<sup>1</sup> A word that is very misleading, as no writer was ever so little the founder of a school.

## The Aftermath

mentioned by Carlyle or Tennyson or Ruskin in all their voluminous works. Among the novelists also he is of no account. Dickens and Thackeray and George Eliot knew him not. Charlotte Brontë does indeed write of him with enthusiasm,<sup>1</sup> but she is alone among the great Victorian authors in this particular. Borrow's *Lavengro* received no commendation from contemporary writers of the first rank. He died in his seventy-eighth year an obscure recluse whose works were all but forgotten. Since that year, 1881, his fame has been continually growing. His greatest work, *Lavengro*, has been reprinted with introductions by many able critics;<sup>2</sup> notable essayists have proclaimed his worth. Of these Mr. Watts-Dunton and Mr. Augustine Birrell have been the most assiduous. The efforts of the former have already been noted. Mr. Birrell has expressed his devotion in more than one essay.<sup>3</sup> Referring to a casual reference

<sup>1</sup> Although this fact was not known until 1908 when I published *The Brontës: Life and Letters*. See vol. ii. p. 24, where Charlotte Brontë writes: "In George Borrow's works I found a wild fascination, a vivid graphic power of description, a fresh originality, an athletic simplicity, which give them a stamp of their own."

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Watts-Dunton, Augustine Birrell and Francis Hindes Groome. Lionel Johnson's essay on Borrow is the more valuable in its enthusiasm in that it was written by a Roman Catholic. Writing in the *Outlook* (1st April, 1899) he said:

"What the four books mean and are to their lovers is upon this sort. Written by a man of intense personality, irresistible in his hold upon your attention, they take you far afield from weary cares and business into the enamouring airs of the open world, and into days when the countryside was uncontaminated by the vulgar conventions which form the worst side of 'civilised' life in cities. They give you the sense of emancipation, of manumission into the liberty of the winding road and fragrant forest, into the freshness of an ancient country-life, into a *milieu* where men are not copies of each other. And you fall in with strange scenes of adventure, great or small, of which a strange man is the centre as he is the scribe; and from a description of a lonely glen you are plunged into a dissertation upon difficult old tongues, and from dejection into laughter, and from gypsydom into journalism, and everything is equally delightful, and nothing that the strange man shows you can come amiss. And you will hardly make up your mind whether he is most Don Quixote, or Rousseau, or Luther, or Defoe; but you will always love these books by a brave man who travelled in far lands, travelled far in his own land, travelled the way of life for close upon eighty years, and died in perfect solitude. And this will be the least you can say, though he would not have you say it—*Requiescat in pace Viator*."

<sup>3</sup> In *Res Judicata*, 1892 (a paper reprinted from *The Reflector*, 8th January, 1888), in his introduction to *Lavengro* (Macmillan, 1900), in an essay entitled "The Office of Literature," in the second series of *Obiter Dicta*, and in an address at Norwich, on 5th July, 1913, reprinted in full in the *Eastern Daily Press* of 7th July, 1913.

# The Life of George Borrow

by Robert Louis Stevenson to *The Bible in Spain*,<sup>1</sup> in which R. L. S. speaks well of that book, Mr. Birrell, not without irony, says:

It is interesting to know this, interesting, that is, to the great Clan Stevenson, who owe suit and service to their liege lord; but so far as Borrow is concerned, it does not matter, to speak frankly, two straws. The author of *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, *The Bible in Spain*, and *Wild Wales* is one of those kings of literature who never need to number their tribe. His personality will always secure him an attendant company, who, when he pipes, must dance.

This is to sum up the situation to perfection. You cannot force people to become readers of Borrow by argument, by criticism, or by the force of authority. You reach the stage of admiration and even love by effects which rise remote from all questions of style or taste. To say, as does a recent critic, that "there is something in Borrow after all; not so much as most people suppose, but still a great deal,"<sup>2</sup> is to miss the compelling power of his best books as they strike those with whom they are among the finest things in literature. In attempting to interest new readers in the man—and this book is not for the sect called Borrowians, to whom I recommend the earlier biographies, but for a wider public which knows not Borrow—I hope I shall succeed in sending many to those incomparable works, which have given me so many pleasant hours.

<sup>1</sup> There are but three references to Borrow in Stevenson's writings, all of them perfunctory. These are in *Memories and Portraits* ("A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas"), in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* ("Some Aspects of Robert Burns"), and in *The Ideal House*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Spectator*, 12th July, 1913.

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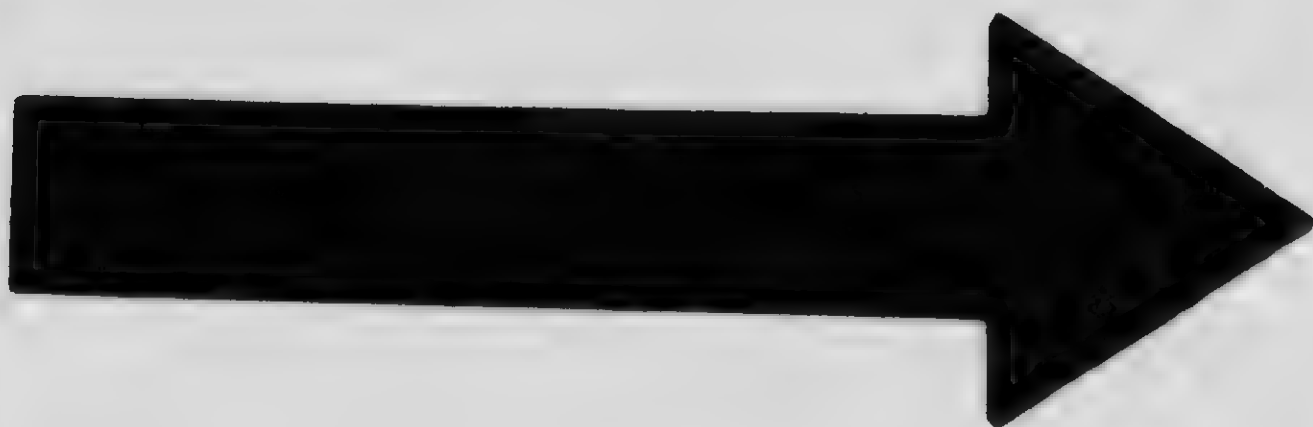
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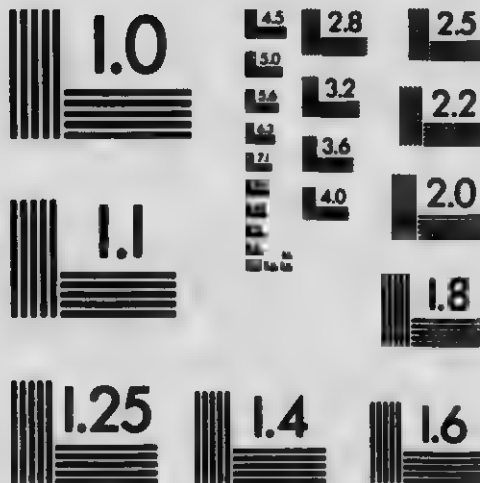
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## C



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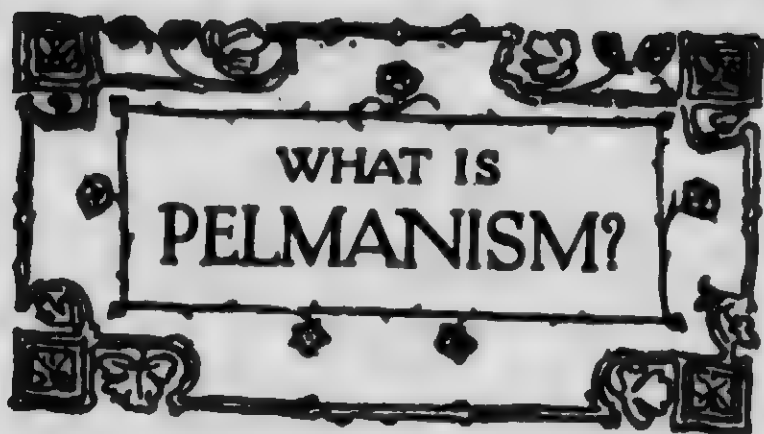
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# "I'd like to take up Pelmanism, but—"

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## *Some Doubts Dispelled*

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**T**HE very prominence which Pelmanism has attained during recent years forms the basis of a doubt which exists in the minds of many people. A business girl said to me only the other day, "I'd like to take up Pelmanism, but it's so much advertised that I wonder whether there is not a certain amount of quackery about it."

The association of extensive advertising with quackery is a relic of long years ago, but it is strange how it persists. I was rather surprised, nevertheless, to hear this business woman express the doubt, for she is a marked success in her sphere of work, with a keen, analytical mind.

Inquiry revealed the fact that she had read only one or two of the Pelman announcements closely, though she had glanced in a half-interested way at scores of them. I then divulged that I was a Pelmanist, and immediately a regular machine-gun fire of questions was opened upon me. Was there anything in Pelmanism? Was it free from quackery?

### **Is the Case Overstated?**

Did not the advertisements overstate the case? Wasn't the most made of the successes attained by a few students, while the many secured no benefit worth speaking of? To all of which I replied by two further questions: Was it conceivable that over 400,000 people would voluntarily adopt Pelmanism unless they were convinced that they would gain in some way from the study? Would so many of the leaders of thought, including prominent educationists, influential business men, and well-known authors and editors, publicly state their unbounded faith in Pelmanism if it were not capable of withstanding the most searching investigation?

### **Trebled My Income.**

These broadsides took instant effect, and I followed up my advantage by mentioning some of the results Pelmanism had achieved in my own case: vast improvement in memory; keener perceptions; realisation of dormant possibilities; consciousness of greater power; appreciation of the beauties of poetry; easier concentration. I reserved for my final shots the two most practical outcomes of my Pelmanistic studies.

99

The first of these had a telling effect, for this would-be Pelmanist was full of ambitious plans in business. I told her that during the past two years my earnings had more than trebled, in spite of many difficulties and setbacks, and that to Pelmanism was due the major part of the credit for this financial improvement. The other result was the consummation of an ambitious plan which I had often contemplated, but which, until I had become a Pelmanist, I honestly believed to be something unattainable.

This conversation suggested to me that others are probably deterred from taking up Pelmanism by a variety of "buts," each of which could be disposed of in a minute or two if only it were possible to meet the doubters face to face.

For instance, at various times friends of mine have said: "But I'm not enough of a student to tackle Pelmanism. I could never sit and pore over books and lessons, even if I could find the time." Here we have a dual objection: (1) Pelmanism is thought to be hard to study, and (2) no time can be found for it. Let us deal with the second part of this objection first.

The Pelman Course requires from thirty to sixty minutes daily for a period of about three or four months. Many of the exercises can be practised at odd moments—when walking through the streets, while waiting in a friend's office or home, during train or bus rides, and so on. Other parts of the study can be done at home or at the office without seriously encroaching on one's time for other matters. The main fact to be borne in mind is that all of us can find or make time to do these things which really interest us. And Pelmanism is one of those things. Which brings me to the first part of the objection we are rebutting. Pelmanism is as unlike ordinary formal studies as anything can well be.

The very first lesson reveals the fascination of Pelmanism, and this fascination becomes intensified with each succeeding "little grey book." Of course, you cannot get the most out of Pelmanism unless you are prepared to follow the training closely. But any Pelmanist will tell you that there is no difficulty in doing this. Pelmanism itself provides whatever incentive may be needed by those who by nature are disinclined to apply themselves to study.

### Brain Power.

A frequent contention of the anti-Pelmanists (for there are people who, without knowing what Pelmanism is, are opposed to it) is that it is impossible to make brains grow where none exist. By which they apparently mean that Pelmanism will not make wise men of dullards. Let me say that, so far as I know, the Pelman Institute has never claimed to be able to perform miracles, though tens of thousands of its members would unhesitatingly declare it had done so in their cases. An ordinary school education is the only foundation necessary to enable any woman or man to become a successful Pelmanist.

In fact, it might be said with a great deal of truth that Pelmanism can be of far more benefit to those of comparatively few scholastic attainments than to those who have been endowed with a more liberal education. To be deterred from taking up Pelmanism

because it is thought that only "brainy" people can make profitable use of it is to allow oneself to be influenced by an inaccurate or incomplete idea of what Pelmanism is and does.

### **Eminent Men on Pelmanism.**

On another occasion I was told that Pelmanism was chiefly a matter of very clever advertising, and that the merits of the system existed almost entirely in the imagination of the man responsible for the Pelman announcements. This critic, however, could not explain how it was that men of the calibre of Admiral Lord Beresford, General Sir O'Moore Creagh, V.C., Lieut.-Gen. Sir R. S. S. Baden-Powell, Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, Sir Wm. Robertson Nicoll, Sir H. Rider Haggard, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., Mr. George R. Sims, Mr. Max Pemberton, and many others came to write such glowing tributes to this Course in Mind and Memory Training.

He agreed that their testimony was unimpeachable, and admitted (rather reluctantly, I thought) that perhaps there was more in Pelmanism than he had supposed. It is the declared opinion of hundreds of Pelmanists that the announcements of the Institute err distinctly on the side of moderation. Although the advertisements tell nothing but the truth, they do not tell all the truth, on the principle, I take it, that enough is as good as a feast.

Then there's the man who says: "Yes, Pelmanism is no doubt all right for the brain-worker or student, but I'm a mechanic"—or a farmer, a grocer, a policeman, a telegraphist, a rate collector, as the case may be. Just because some people reach much greater success than others in these vocations is proof that there is scope for keen workers in these and similar fields.

### **Pelmanism for Industrial Workers.**

A Pelman-trained mind will show the industrial worker, for instance, in which direction advancement lies, and what steps to take to attain the goal towards which he is striving.

Thousands of letters from Pelmanists have been published at various times, demonstrating in unmistakable manner the great benefit which anyone can derive from the Course. A coalminer declares Pelmanism to be very useful to him in his work; a munition worker gives Pelmanism direct credit for his ability to design a patent pile; a Manchester bleacher says he never spent money to better advantage than on the Course. These instances could be multiplied almost indefinitely. The man or woman who hesitates to adopt Pelmanism through a mistaken notion that it is useful only to the business and professional classes is neglecting the supreme opportunity of his or her life.

*Full particulars of the Pelman Course are given in "Mind and Memory," which also contains a complete descriptive Synopsis of the 12 lessons. A copy of this interesting booklet, together with a full reprint of TRUTH'S famous Report on the work of the Pelman Institute, and particulars showing how you can secure the complete Course at a reduced fee, may be obtained gratis and post free by any reader who applies to The Pelman Institute, D, Pelman House, Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C. 1.*

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